

Faith and Practice

REPRESENTED IN FIFTY-FOUR

S E R M O N S

ON THE PRINCIPAL HEADS OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

Preached at Berry-Street, 1733.

BY

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S. R. M. O. N. S.



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S E R M O N S

ON THE

PRINCIPAL HEADS

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

S E R M O N XXVIII.

Public Worship in all the Parts of it.

ACTS II. 46.

—Continuing daily with one accord in the temple,

THAT God is to be worshipped in his own appointed way, has been proved. It is my work at present to discourse of the public worship we ought to pay to our great Creator. The primitive Christians discharged their duty, in this respect, with great zeal and unanimity: it was for this purpose they “ continued daily with one
VOL. II. A “ accord

“accord in the temple:” they did not satisfy themselves with worshipping God in secret or private, in their closets, or houses; but whenever they had an opportunity for it, they ~~went~~ upon him in the most public manner. I shall,

First, Shew that we “ought to worship God in public.”

Secondly, Consider “the ends of public worship.”

Thirdly, The “several parts” of it. Then close with an application.

First, Let me shew that it is “incumbent upon us to worship God in public.”

I. It is obvious to the natural reason of mankind, that this is a duty. The light of nature discovers the reasonableness of men’s meeting together to pay their joint homage to the divine Being: even those, whose “foolish heart was so darkened,” that they changed the glory of the incorruptible “God into an image made like unto corruptible creatures,” were not so blind, as not to see the fitness of their honouring such things with public worship which they accounted deities. The Heathens, who are covered with thick darkness, have their temples, or places, by what name soever they are distinguished, to which they resort for the celebration of some rites, whereby they think their idols are honoured. Though men differ widely both as to the objects and methods of worship, yet the nations of the earth seem to agree that public worship is to be celebrated and maintained.

God has formed our nature for society, and given it a strong bias hereto; is it not then a dictate of nature, that we should associate ourselves for the most important purposes of religion, as well

as

as for the lesser purposes of the natural and civil life?

Our Creator has made us capable of signifying to all about us the sense we have of his perfections, of our dependence upon him, and obligations to him: should we not then employ our best powers after that manner in his service, to which they are so wisely fitted? "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the firmament sheweth his handy-work. How excellent is his name in all the earth!" And is it not fit that intelligent creatures should shew forth his glories by the most open acknowledgment of them? The law of God written in the hearts of men, as the apostle expresses it, Rom. ii. 15. obliges them to the performance of social, public worship.

II. God has in his word given plain significations of his will, that men should publicly worship him. There is great reason to think that public worship was practised in the world long before we have any account in scripture of its being required by an express command. The light of nature directed men to assemble themselves together for the worship of God: perhaps therefore he did not see it needful expressly to reveal his mind relating to this affair, till their natural notions of religion were greatly corrupted by idolatry. Then it pleased the glorious Sovereign of the universe to separate the seed of Abraham from the rest of the nations, to be his peculiar people, to bear his name in the world; to whom a law was given, according to which the worship they performed was to be regulated. All their males were enjoined, "to appear three times in the year before the Lord God," Exod. xxiii. 17. They were to repair from distant parts to his house, where they worshipped him together in a very solemn manner.

But though the children of Israel were to offer sacrifices only at the tabernacle or temple, yet all their worship of a public nature was not to be confined to these: they did meet together, at least, on the Sabbath-days in other places, where they did engage in some parts of divine worship. This appears from the account given us in scripture of synagogues. It must be confessed, that we cannot find any express command given to the Jews, whereby they were bound to erect synagogues, and to assemble in them for the service of the Lord. But they might easily infer from what is said of the weekly Sabbath, Lev. xxiii. 3. that they ought then to meet together, and join in holy religious exercises: for it is there stiled *an holy convocation*, which character is also given to those feasts mentioned in the sequel of that chapter, when they were to assemble at the tabernacle, or temple: But surely they could not think that God required them to resort to these places every Sabbath-day from the remotest corners of the land of Canaan; that had been utterly impracticable. We are told that “Moses of old time had in every city them that preached him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day. Acts xv. 21.

Jesus Christ, while he was here on earth, did not only go to “Jerusalem, whither the tribes of the Lord went up, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord,” at the great feasts, Psalm cxxii. 4. but he also attended constantly to the service of the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, Luke iv. 16. “He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day.” His example lays a strong obligation upon those who profess to be his followers,

to shew a great regard to the public worship of God.

The disciples of Jesus, in the early days of Christianity, discharged their duty in this matter with great diligence: but in process of time the love of some began to cool, which appeared in their neglect of the duties of public worship. To prevent the spreading of this great evil, the Apostle admonished them, Heb. x. 25. "Not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some was." Thus I have shewed that reason and revelation oblige us to worship God in public.

Secondly, The ends of public worship are to be considered.

I. The great end of public worship is the glory of God. As he made all things for himself, it is highly reasonable we should principally design the glorifying of his name in all that we do. Indeed we can add no real glory to God by any of our services: he is infinitely above us. We are capable of honouring him, only by an acknowledgment of his glorious excellencies, and by a behaviour which expresses that high regard to him which is due. Now when God is worshipped by his creatures, they own his being, his all-sufficiency, his infinite understanding, that to him belongeth power and mercy; and the more public their worship is, the more clearly they declare their esteem of the divine Majesty; the more they spread abroad the honour of his name. The house of God, where he was publicly worshipped, is called "the place where his honour dwelt." Psalm xxvi. 8. and it may have this character given it, not only upon the account of the remarkable displays he there made of his power and glory; but because he was there honoured

noured in an eminent manner by the social worship of his people: for this reason, as we may justly suppose, the Lord is said "to love the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Psal. lxxxvii. 2. The seed of Jacob called upon the name of the Lord in their respective families, and he watched over them for good; but he had a more tender concern for the gates of Sion, because he received greater honour by the more public worship which they paid him there. Supposing, as some persons are apt to think, that they improve their time as usefully in their own houses as in worshipping assemblies; that they are wiser than their teachers; or that they can read much better sermons than they are like to hear; yet will not this excuse their forsaking the assembling of themselves together: for the chief end of divine worship is the glory of God; and this cannot be so well answered by secret, or private devotions, as it is by those that are public. The honour of his name is more propagated in the congregation than it can be in the family. Though our Saviour far exceeded those in knowledge who officiated in the Jewish synagogue, yet was he stated in his attendance there; for he knew that by so doing he glorified his Father.

II. Another end of public worship is our spiritual benefit. God has connected our advantage with his own glory: he dispenses to us blessings in that way, wherein we shew forth the honour of his name. He promised his people of old, that in all places where he should record his name, he would come unto them and bless them. Exod. xx. 24. By God's recording his name in places, we are to understand his pitching upon them to be the seats of his public worship; as appears from the direction given in the former part of the verse, how to make

make the altar whereon he would have burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings to be sacrificed : his coming to his worshippers in these places was with a gracious design, it was to bless them, and to do them good.

There is not such an appointment of any place under the gospel, to which any acts of religious worship are to be confined, as there was under the Mosaic constitution : but our Lord has said, that " where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. He appeared to John, Rev. i. 13. " in the midst of the golden candlesticks," that is, of the churches ; and he is in the midst of them, communicating his beneficent influences to them.

God delights to honour the ordinances of his public worship, by making them means of grace. It may be said of those places where these are observed, as we are told it should be said of Zion, Psalm lxxxvii. 5. " this and that man was born there." Most commonly it is by the means of public institutions of God's worship, that sinners are awakened and converted ; are made partakers of a spiritual divine life ; it is hereby that the saints are for the most part edified and comforted. All the private instructions, which the Psalmist enjoyed, were not effectual to remove a very perplexing temptation, wherewith he was exercised : but when he went into the sanctuary, so much light was imparted to him there, as cleared his difficulty : Psal. lxxiii. 17. Upon which he concludes in verse 29. that it was good for him to draw near to God, that is, in the sanctuary. David expected that the clearest and most engaging discoveries of God would be made to him in his house, therefore he was very desirous of having his stated-abode there. Psalm xxvii.

xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The title of the xciiid Psalm informs us, that it was a psalm or song for the Sabbath day; and towards the close of it, the great advantage accruing to the righteous from their diligent attendance to the ordinances of public worship is elegantly set forth, ver. 12, 13, 14. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing."

Thirdly, By public worship we signify our communion with one another in the great concerns of religion. The scripture represents believers as one in God and Christ. John xvii. 20, 21. "Neither pray I for these alone, (said our Saviour in his last prayer for his disciples,) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." They are spoken of as members one of another: Eph. iv. 25. They have one God and Father; the same Mediator and Saviour; they are animated by one spirit; they belong to the same family, and they are travelling towards the same heavenly habitation. Now, when as many of them as conveniently can assemble together to partake of the ordinances of the gospel, they hereby denote their oneness, their fellowship one with another. As their joining with seriousness in solemn acts of divine worship tends to their mutual encouragement to pursue the ways of God, so it

has

has a tendency to engage their hearts to each other, which is a duty much pressed under the Christian dispensation. So that those who enjoy a great deal of communion with God in their retirements, in their secret devotions, should yet frequent, as they have opportunity and ability, the worshipping assemblies of his people; for hereby they profess their communion with them, which is one considerable end of public worship. So far as any withdraw from this, so far they do in effect disown themselves to be of the society of those who fear and serve the Lord; the thoughts of which must strike terror into every soul that has a sense of godliness. Having spoken of public worship in general, I am, in the third place, to consider distinctly the several parts of it; you'll find them mentioned in the context.

I. Prayer is a very important part of public worship. The house of God where his people met together to worship him, is called the "house of prayer," Matt. xxi. 13. We have all our common wants and weaknesses; is it not then proper we should present our joint supplications to God for supplies and helps? When an affair of great consequence and general concern is depending, it is usual for such as are interested therein to join in petitioning those, to whom the determination of it belongs; apprehending that their union will add weight to the request: in allusion hereto, our Saviour speaks of the great efficacy that should attend the united addresses of his disciples, Matt. xviii. 19. "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." We may well suppose, that this very gracious promise of our Lord did much encourage

those who received his word to continue stedfastly in prayers, as we are told they did, in the 42d verse of the chapter where my text is. When we assemble to offer up all our desires together unto God, that he would bestow upon us the various mercies our several cases require, we do here magnify his rich goodness; for this is a testimony of our belief that his mercy is unbounded, that there is no danger of exhausting it, that the grant which he makes of his favours to some, can be no hindrance to his supplying the necessities of others.

Upon great and uncommon occasions, those concerned should hold extraordinary assemblies to implore the merciful regard of God. The reasonableness of this course appeared to the king of Nineveh, who commanded the inhabitants of that city, when threatened with a speedy overthrow, to cry mightily unto God, to avert the impending desolation; nor were their cries in vain. Jonah iii. God orders, in a time of imminent danger, "the trumpet to be blown in Zion, for the calling of a solemn assembly, the gathering of the elders and people, to beg of God that he would spare them, and not give his heritage to reproach," Joel ii. 15, 16, 17. which practice is encouraged by a gracious promise, verse 19, 20. When Peter was in prison, and designs were formed against his life, the preservation of which seemed to be of great consequence to the interest of Christ, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him," Acts xii. 5. and he was rescued from the power of his enemies with a mighty hand.

Whatsoever act of worship the children of men meet together to perform, it should be accompanied with prayer; for the aids of divine grace are needful to enable them to serve God acceptably in every instance of duty; and is it not fit they should beseech

befeech him to help them under their infirmities, when they are engaging in any religious performances?

Public prayers are to be expreffed or uttered by one perfon at a time, who fhould be furnifhed with fuch gifts and graces of the Spirit, as render him capable of putting up with decency, requests that are fuitable to the circumftances of the congregation; and the defires of all the people fhould go along with him that officiates: they fhould make every proper petition, that he presents, their own, and fubjoin at leaft in their minds an hearty Amen.

II. The praifes of God are a part of public worfhip., “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praifed in the mountain of his holinefs.” Pfal. xlviii.

1. His perfections infinitely transcend all the praifes of his creatures; his “glory is high above the heavens:” does it not, then become his people here on earth to join together, and affift each other in praifing his name? David calls upon his devout neighbours to concur with him in this bleffed work, that they might aid one another herein. Pfalm xxxiv. 3. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let “us exalt his name together.” So ardent was the Pfalmift’s defire that God may be praifed; and he had fuch a fenfe of his own inability to render fufficient praifes to him, that he would fain ftir up the whole creation to fhew forth his glories; this appears from the cxlviii Pfalm. As we all receive from the hands of God particular benefits, for which we fhould offer unto him our particular thanks; fo he confers mercies which are of an extenfive nature, of a general advantage: and are we in fome refpect common fharers in thefe? furely then we ought jointly to acknowledge our obligations to the giver of them. We are required to “enter into the gates “of God with thanksgiving, and into his courts

“with praise,” Psal. c. 4. And David says, Psalm lxxv. 1. “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion:” the meaning of which expression I take to be this; that as God is ready to furnish his faithful people with matter for praise, so they willingly embrace all opportunities to appear before him, in the place of public worship, with their thank-offerings. The Psalmist did not satisfy himself with praising God in his own house; but he resolved to “praise him with his whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and the congregation.” Psal. cxi. 1.

We are never in such destitute circumstances here on earth, as not to be obliged to bless the name of God; therefore we are commanded to add thanksgivings to our supplications. Phil. iv. 6. “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” 1 Theff. v. 17, 18. “Pray without ceasing; in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” The praises of God should no more be neglected than prayer to him in all our assemblies for public worship. The disciples, of whom we read in the text that they “continued daily with one accord in the temple,” are spoken of in the next verse as “praising God.” But when the Lord grants eminent favours, the benefit and comfort of which reach to many, is it not just they should meet together to honour him with more than ordinary praise?

It is proper to consider, in this place, that particular method of praising God by singing which is often mentioned in the scripture. We may observe, that it is natural for the joy of men’s hearts to break forth into songs; and is it not fit they should express the delight they take in the perfections and mercies of God by singing his praises? Therefore saith the apostle James, v. 13. “Is any merry? Let him

“ him sing psalms.” The Heathens were directed by the light of nature to look on this as a reasonable practice; they composed and sung hymns to their gods.

Singing the praises of God was doubtless a part of his public worship under the legal dispensation. David and other holy men were moved by the Holy Ghost to compile several psalms for the service of the sanctuary. With what earnestness are the people of God pressed, in the book of Psalms, to “ sing praises unto the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: to come before his presence with singing.” And is it to be supposed that this should have no place in the public worship of the New Testament; when the gospel gives us such bright discoveries of the glory and grace of God, and so often bids those by whom it is embraced to rejoice in its rich privileges? Do not these deserve the noblest, the loudest songs of praise? It is with a view to the blessings of the gospel, which should be diffused among the Gentiles, that all lands are required to “ make a joyful noise unto God, to sing forth the honour of his name, and make his praise glorious.” Psalm lxvi. 1, 2. For it is said in the 4th verse, “ That all the earth shall worship God, shall sing unto him; they shall sing unto his name, Selah.” This prophecy was not accomplished while the law of Moses was in force. Must it not then have a respect to the gospel-state of the church? To which therefore it is reasonable to refer the preceding words. Are not Christians exhorted by the apostle to sing the praises of God with united hearts and voices? Eph. v. 19, 20. “ Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” We have an exhortation much to the same purpose, Col. iii. 16. “ Let
“ the

“ the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another “ in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing “ with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Does not the apostle recommend singing with the spirit, and with understanding also, to the Corinthians in their religious assemblies? 1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15. And are not those faithful followers of Jesus, who shall be victorious over the beast, represented as singing the “ song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song “ of the Lamb?” Rev. xv. 3.

III. Another ordinance of public worship is “ hearing the word of God.” Under the Mosaic constitution, the priest’s lips were to keep knowledge, and the people were to “ seek the law at his mouth.” Mala. ii. 7. Our Lord Jesus Christ is King of the church, and he has appointed ministers, “ who are “ to give themselves continually to prayer, and the “ ministry of the word; to be instant in season, and “ out of season,” in preaching of it. Therefore, certainly it is the duty of Christians to be instant in season, and out of season, in hearing the gospel. Christ has not only bestowed gifts upon men to qualify them to be extraordinary ministers, as apostles and prophets; but he does, by the ordinary influence of his Spirit, fit persons to be stated officers in his church, “ as pastors and teachers; for the “ perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till “ we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the “ knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect “ man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness “ of Christ,” Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. Surely then it is incumbent on all to attend to their ministrations; to endeavour to improve by their gifts for the accomplishment of this blessed end.

It

It was by hearing the gospel preached, that the persons mentioned in the text were converted; and we are told in the 42d verse "that they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine:" they remained very attentive to their instructions, and held fast the truths delivered to them. Faith cometh by hearing, and it is by the word of truth that God sanctifies his people; therefore should they, as "new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

The ministers of Christ should be very careful to "teach men to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded them," Matt. xxviii. 20. to preach sound doctrine; and it behoves their hearers to receive what they propose to them, agreeable to the scripture, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, with serious attention and reverence. As they should "take heed what they hear," Mark iv. 24. so they ought to beware of despising what is spoken from the Lord. Great are the benefits communicated to the children of men by the means of the gospel; therefore is it highly becoming they should attend to it with diligence. Thus the Apostle argues from the consideration of one of these benefits, James i. 18, 19. "Of his own will did God beget us with the word of truth: wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear."

IV. The last ordinance of public worship I shall now mention is the "Lord's Supper." Very probably this is meant by breaking of bread, wherein those who received the word, and were baptized, are said to continue stedfastly, in the 42d verse; that being put there in conjunction with hearing and praying, it may be reasonably supposed to signify the partaking of the Lord's Supper: which, in the earliest days of Christianity, was seldom if ever omitted

omitted, when believers met together to hear the word, and to pray. This ordinance was first instituted by our Saviour, in an assembly of his disciples, who received it together: hereby his followers were required to shew forth his death till he comes: their receiving of it signifies not only their fellowship with God and Christ, but with one another. 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Is it not then most agreeable to the institution and design of the Lord's Supper, that it be administered to a congregation, and not to a single person? But I must not enlarge upon this ordinance, for it is to be the subject of a future discourse. What now remains is the application.

APPLICATION.

1. How thankful should we be for our liberty to worship God in public! It appears from what has been said, that this is a great privilege. It is indeed sad to think that we have made no better improvement of it; but the consideration of our unworthiness should awaken in us a more grateful sense of God's goodness, in continuing so long to us the peaceable enjoyment of our civil and religious rights; that we may meet together to worship him according to the dictates of our consciences, none making us afraid. Had God dealt with us according to our desert, our teachers had been driven into corners, we had been punished with a famine of hearing the word. How many of our protestant brethren are forced to quit their native countries, because

because they cannot enjoy there the ordinances of public worship, without Popish sinful mixtures? Let us bless God, that this is not our case; and beware, lest, by our continued unfruitfulness, we provoke him to deprive us of the unspeakable advantage we enjoy in a free and undisturbed access to his house.

2. It is matter of great lamentation, that there is so much indifference among us to the public worship of God. This is wholly neglected by multitudes; and it is but too seldom attended upon by many, who make some pretences to religion. Our fathers have told us, that great difficulties and dangers, from the severity of penal laws, have not deterred them from joining with religious societies to partake of divine ordinances: but what slight matters do now confine persons to their homes, and hinder their closure with the opportunities which are offered them to wait upon God in public? If the public worship of God be of such importance as you have heard, then certainly the great disregard to it that is shewn at present is much to be lamented. It is a sad instance of the great decay of godliness amongst us.

3. Let us have a care of "forfaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." One day in seven is appointed to be a season of rest from the business of this world, and it ought to be observed as a day of holy convocation. We should carefully improve the opportunities we then have to seek the Lord, to sing his praises, and to hear his word in the worshipping assemblies of his people. In order to press you hereto, consider,

1. That an indifference to the duties of public worship is a dangerous step towards apostacy. When persons begin to be remiss in their attendance upon the ordinances of God's house, they are in no small danger of throwing off all forms of godliness

in process of time: as appears from sad and too frequent experience in our day. Now if you would avoid the dreadful state of apostates, described by the apostle, Heb. x. 26, 27. let the caution given by him in the 25th be regarded by you, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together."

2. Persons of the most eminent piety have expressed the greatest value for the public worship of God. What proficiency did David make in religion? and how did he love the habitation of God's house? He sadly bemoans his case when separated from it; and great was the joy of his soul when he might appear there.

Would we grow in knowledge and grace? would we be prepared to worship with an innumerable company of angels, and in the general assembly of the first-born above, than which nothing is more desirable? let us with frequency and delight repair to the tabernacles of God, the congregations of his people here on earth, for these are nurseries for heaven.

SER.

SERMON XXIX.

Family and Secret Worship.

EPHESIANS VI. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

TO pray always, cannot possibly mean, in this text, that we should be continually praying, without any intermission, throughout our whole lives; for that is neither consistent with our natural strength, nor with our religious duty. We have other work to do besides this, and other duties to attend upon, which are of no less importance; But to pray always, is to pray constantly, at all stated times, and on every proper occasion. And so the Greek words *ἐν παντί καὶ πάντοτε* had been as justly translated, and perhaps better understood, if they had been rendered, *in every season*. Thus in common language, we say a tree is always fruitful, which yields its fruit duly in the proper season: and in scripture language, the sacrifice which was offered every morning and evening, is called “the continual burnt-offering,” Exod. xxix. 42.; and persons who duly attended the service of God in the

temple, at the stated hours of worship, are said to be always or continually there: as the disciples of Christ “were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God,” Luke xxiv. 53. So to pray always, is to keep up a constant course of prayer, especially at stated seasons.

Prayer does sometimes mean one act of worship only; and sometimes it takes in the whole compass of our devotion: therefore such public buildings, as were anciently appropriated to the use of religious worship, were called “houses of prayer;” that being a general name for all such acts of devotion as were usually performed in them. It would best suit my design in this sermon, to take the word *prayer* in that larger sense; and then, by all prayer, we might understand all sorts of devotions and acts of worship, whether public, private, or secret; whether such as are proper to the church, to the family, or the closet.

The last discourse was on the subject of public worship: my province is now to treat of family, and of secret worship; and my design is by the help of God,

First, “To explain the nature of them both.”

Secondly, “To convince you that it is your duty to practise them.”

Thirdly, “To press this duty upon you by some arguments and motives.” And then,

Fourthly, “To give you some practical directions about it.”

I apprehend it will be best to treat of family, and of secret worship separately, and to begin with the former of them. Now, according to the method proposed, I am,

First,

First, To explain the nature of family worship; for which I suppose a few words may serve, when the nature of divine worship in the general, and of public worship in particular, has already been opened to you. For family worship differs rather in some circumstances from that which is public, than in the nature of the thing. Most acts of devotion are common to the church, and the family; as prayer, and praise, religious instruction, and reading the word of God. I have not room in this one sermon, to treat of each of these distinctly; and perhaps there is not much need of it: for these are plain points, in which people do not so much want to be informed, as persuaded to practise. I shall chiefly speak of family prayer; for if this was but conscientiously performed, I should not much doubt, but that all other acts of family devotion would be practised too.

In the worship of the family, as well as in the church, it is certain there must be some one to minister; to be as the mouth of the family to God in the prayer, and as the mouth of God to the family in reading, and religious instruction. This office does ordinarily devolve on the master or head of the family; though, no doubt, but in some cases, he may appoint another to assist him in this work, or to perform it in his stead. However, it certainly lies upon the head of the family to take care, that family worship is constantly performed; and if it be neglected, the sin of that omission lies chiefly at his door. I shall now endeavour,

Secondly, To convince you that family worship is a duty, which all families are under great obligations to practise. As,

1. We may argue from the nature and reason of the thing. I look upon family worship to be a duty

duty even of natural religion. Reason alone, without a Bible, would tell us that we ought to do homage to our Creator, that we should adore and worship this great Author of our being, that we should pray to him for what we want, and praise him for the blessings we receive at his hands : and there is just the same reason that such homage should be paid to God by every society of creatures, which is of his institution and appointment, as by every single person. Now a family is a society united together by God's appointment and providence. He who made our souls and our bodies, and joined them together in vital union, has also made husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, and united them into one family : and, therefore, as it is the voice of nature, that my soul and body should join in worshipping their common Creator ; so also that the several members of a family should join together in the worship of that God, who, by his institution and providence, has united them in one society. Is there any reason that we should pray to God for personal mercies ? there is just the same reason, that whole families should pray to him for family blessings. It is my duty to confess my personal sins to God, and ask his pardon ? it is as much the reasonable duty of every family, to join in confessing their family transgressions. And alas, how many are our family sins ? how many are our breaches of God's law, with respect to family converse and enjoyments ? and how many are our family mercies ? as health, and peace in the family, success of family affairs, and protection from family dangers. And have we not family wants and troubles too ? such as sickness, straits, losses, and disappointments, which affect the whole family. Is it not a most reasonable thing then, that the whole family should join

joint together in humiliation, thanksgiving, and prayer? that those who sin together, should pray together; and that those who receive mercies together should unite in praising their common Benefactor. Thus there is plainly the same reason, in the nature of things, for family worship, as for any worship of God at all: and truly one would wonder that any who make conscience of worshipping God in the church, or in the closet, should neglect to worship him in their families.

The ancient Heathens were sensible of their obligation to this duty: they had their lares and penates, their household-Gods, as well as other deities; and to them they offered sacrifices and prayers in their families. How will those Heathens rise up in judgment against prayerless families of professed Christians; they did more to honour their idols, than these do to honour the living and true God.

2. We may argue our obligation to family worship from scripture, where this duty is recommended to us by many examples of good men. You remember how God spoke of it to Abraham's honour, that he would use his best endeavours to promote religion in his family and household; which I know not how he could do, without family worship, Gen. xviii. 19. "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Joshua was another illustrious instance of this sort of piety. It was a brave resolution of his, that, whatever others did, "as for himself and his house, they should serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15. It is recorded of Cornelius, very much to his honour, Acts x. 2. that he was "a devout man, one that feared God, with all his house, and prayed to God alway." Now, if all his household feared God, no doubt but they all made conscience of praying to him: How comes it then to be said
of

of Cornelius, the master of the family, so particularly, that "he prayed to God alway?" must it not mean, that he constantly prayed in and with his family? But we have still a more engaging example of family worship on record in the scripture, than any of these, even the example of our dear Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, tho' he had no house of his own, yet he had a family. "He was the Master of the house, and his apostles were those of the household;" Matt. x. 25. Now let us see how he walked and behaved in his family: sometimes we find him instructing them in private, and explaining his parables to them, and examining them concerning their proficiency in sacred knowledge. "Have ye understood all these things?" Matt. xiii. 51. We find him also praying with his family, Luke ix. 18. "As he was alone praying, his disciples were with him." Alone, that is retired, with his own family, from the crowd that followed him. Thus has Christ recommended to us the practice of family worship by his own example: and "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked," 1 John ii. 6. Thus far you see your obligations to this duty, both as creatures and as Christians. Here reason and scripture speak both the same language, viz. that God should be worshipped in all our families.

I go on now,

Thirdly, To press you to the practice of this duty. And,

1. Let me recommend it to you, by the advantages that will accrue from it. It is a likely means of engaging the protection and blessing of God on your families. It converts your houses into Bethels, houses of God. And I make no doubt but many families

families have been blessed, and prospered the more, even in their temporal interests, on account of family worship. It is the blessing of God that maketh rich and prosperous; and what more likely way to obtain that blessing, than for a whole family to join in prayer and ask it daily of God? This, however, we may rest assured of, that God will bless the habitation of the just, and the families that call on his name, with all such blessings as he knows are best and fittest for them.

Family worship has a further happy tendency, to maintain and promote peace and love in a family. It is an excellent means of reconciling family differences, and of endearing the several members of the domestic community to one another. Where devotion and the love of God reign in every heart, jars and discords will not be very common; they will seldom rise high; however, they cannot be of any long continuance: the next meeting of the family together at the throne of grace, to worship their common Father and Friend, will probably reconcile all again. Thus family worship is a means of their present mutual comfort; and it is an excellent means of forming every one into a meetness for happiness hereafter. It has actually proved a means of conversion to some persons. It is undoubtedly of great use to keep up a lively sense of religion in our souls, of improving the divine life in us whilst we are here, and fitting us for the heavenly life of glory.

And let me suggest this one thing more to masters and heads of families, that to keep up the worship of God in your families, is the way to leave them with comfort, when you come to die. As when Christ was about to leave the world, it was with no little satisfaction that he appealed to his Father concerning the faithful discharge of his duty

in his own family, "I have manifested thy name
 " to the men which thou gavest me out of the
 " world," said he, "I have given unto them the
 " words which thou gavest me, and they have re-
 " ceived them," John xvii. 6, 8. And now, he
 could with assured hope recommend them to his
 Father's care and blessing; "Father, keep through
 " thine own name those whom thou hast given
 " me." So may a pious master of a family re-
 commend his children and his household, to the
 blessing of God, when he is going to be parted from
 them: and he may reasonably hope, that it shall
 fare the better with them, for the many prayers
 which he has offered up to heaven for them, and
 with them. "What man is he that feareth the
 " Lord? his soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed
 " shall inherit the earth," Psalm xxv. 13. These
 are some of the apparent advantages of family reli-
 gion and worship.

2. You must give me leave also to set before
 you some of the mischiefs and evils that will pro-
 bably follow on neglecting this duty: As, that you
 will hereby bring the curse of God on your fami-
 lies, and expose them to his judgments. "The
 " curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked."
 How awful is that text, Jerem. x. 25. "Pour out
 " thy fury upon the Heathen, and upon the fami-
 " lies that call not on thy name." And how just
 would it be for God to to withdraw his protection
 from your families, which they never acknowledge,
 nor ask him for; to send down his judgments,
 which they never deprecate; and to curse your fa-
 mily enjoyments, which they never sanctify by
 prayer.

Consider further, what influence the neglect of
 this duty will probably have on the decay of piety
 in the world. If religion decays in private families,

it will die in course out of public societies. If you thus shut God out of your houses, he will soon leave the nation. And indeed I cannot but suspect, that one great cause of the present apparent decay of piety amongst us, is the too common neglect of family worship.

Christians, have you any concern for your families, or for your country? have you any zeal for the honour and interest of God amongst us? I beseech you, neglect not his worship in your families; engage his presence in your houses, that he may stay among us, and not forsake our Israel.

Consider again, how you can answer for the neglect of this duty to God, who has committed your families to your charge and care. How severely does the scripture speak of those who neglect to provide for their own, and them of their own house? "They have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels," 1 Tim. v. 6. And have you forgot, that these members of your families have souls as well as bodies? both need to be provided for; and something you may do to provide for both. Do you think that you shall faithfully discharge your trust, by providing food for their bodies, while their souls, their precious and immortal souls, are left to starve and perish through your neglect? Parents, do you expect that your children will grow wise to salvation, without your instructing them; or that they will learn to pray, if you never lead them in the way by praying with them? Is it thus that you "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" as he has commanded you, Ephes. vi. 4. As God has set ministers to be as watchmen in the churches; so has he set you in your own houses; and if any souls perish there, through your neglect, "their blood will be required at your hands," Ezek. iii. 17, 18. Should

God demand of you in the great day, as he once demanded at Cain, "Where is thy brother?" "Where are those children, and those servants which I gave you in charge, to bring up for me? did you diligently instruct them in the service of God? did you set them good examples of piety and devotion? did you pray for them and with them, and so lead them the way to the throne of grace?" What will you answer to the Judge? nay, how will you answer for this sad neglect to those of your own household? it will surely be a sad parting from your prayerless families, when you come to die: and what can you expect, but to hear them curse you to your face another day? because you gave them free liberty to go on in sin, and to ruin their own souls; and did not interpose either your authority, or persuasions, or prayers to prevent it: that you did not instruct them better, nor pray with them, nor teach them to pray for themselves. Such are the sad prospects which the head of a prayerless family may reasonably have of a judgment day, and of another world.

I would hope, that by this time you are disposed to hearken to some directions about the manner of performing this duty; and that, if hitherto you have neglected it, you are now inclined to practise it. But I must detain you a few moments, while I answer an objection or two, wherewith many persons are excusing themselves in the neglect of it.

1. One is, that they have not time. They have such a multiplicity of affairs upon their hands, and their business is of such a nature, that they can very seldom find time to call their families together to worship God. I fear this is but a mere excuse with most persons that make it. However, let our worldly business be what it will, sure I am, that
 God's

God's business, and our soul's business, deserves to be first minded : and besides, this is but an improvident way of husbanding your time, to lay it all out on your worldly business, to the neglect of God and his worship ; because God can blast your best endeavours, and bring them all to nothing. The most diligent hand, without his blessing, will never make you rich ; methinks then, you should be afraid of setting about any business, until you have first been at prayer, lest God should withhold his blessing, and you lose the labours of all the day.

2. The excuse which is most commonly made by those who have no great heart to this duty, is, that they have not gifts for it. They would willingly pray in their families, but they want a capacity. It is almost the only case in which people are very apt to have a mean opinion of their own abilities. But certainly this is not the language of Christian humility. If you know not how to pray, it is more than time you had learned, and you have reason to be ashamed and humbled before God, that you have learned it no sooner. However, try now : set up the worship of God in your families : and if you do but bring a sincere heart to the throne of grace ; a heart deeply affected with a sense of your sins, and wants, and dangers, and mercies ; probably you will find the difficulty not so great as you thought for. Moses was grievously afraid of going to speak to Pharaoh, he did not believe he should be able to say any thing ; but after he had been once, we never hear him make that objection any more : he was willing to go as often as God would please to send him. So, would you but once try, and set up the worship of God in your families, I do not at all doubt but you will be encouraged to go on with it. Or, however, rather than

than family worship should be wholly omitted, I would advise to make use of some well composed form of prayer : but as I believe no form can be found that will suit all the various cases and circumstances of your families at all times, I propose this only as an expedient for the present, that family prayer might not be neglected one day longer. Do but heartily apply yourselves to this duty, beg of God the promised help of his good Spirit, go to Christ as the disciples did, and say, "Lord, teach us to pray ;" and I may venture to assure you, that this objection will vanish, and that in a short time too. I now go on,

Fourthly, to give you some practical directions about the manner of worshipping God in your families. As,

1. Chuse proper times and seasons for family worship, when you can be most at liberty from your worldly business, and when you, and those who worship with you, will probably be in the best frame to attend on this duty. As in the morning pretty early, before your thoughts are too far engaged in the business of the day, and in the evening e'er it be too late, before the family grows drowsy and sleepy.

It would be prudent in most families, to fix certain stated hours for worship, and to keep to them as much as possible ; for we seldom want leisure for what we are used to do at certain times, as eating, and sleeping : no more, should we, ordinarily, want time for prayer, did we but as prudently fix the hours for it as we do for our bodily refreshments.

2. Let this duty be performed constantly. "Continue in prayer, and watch unto the same with thanksgiving ;" watch against interruptions and intermissions of this duty. Let not worldly business hinder

hinder you any day from that which is a greater duty, and of more serious importance to you, than any mere worldly matter ever can be. If you would have God continue his presence with your families, let them continue to call upon him.

3. Let family worship be performed with great seriousness. Take heed that it does not degenerate into mere form and custom. To worship the great God is always a very solemn thing, whether it be done in the church, or the family; remember who it is with whom you have to do. And, once more,

4. Let this duty be set about speedily, and without any more delay. Have any of you lived in the neglect of it hitherto? But are you now convinced, that it is both your duty and interest to set up the worship of God in your families; and can you neglect it any longer? Will you dare to go on still to sin against God and conscience, in the omission of so plain and great a duty?

Let me once more entreat and beseech you, for Christ's sake, for your family's sake, for the nation's sake, and for your own soul's sake, that the worship of God may be set up in your families without any more delay. I must now leave the matter to God and your consciences.

O! may a divine blessing crown this humble attempt with happy success, that so family religion may be revived, and practical godliness may again get ground of profaneness and wickedness in this our land.

I must now turn my discourse to the subject of secret worship, such as is proper to the closet, and to our hours of sacred retirement. And,

First, As to the nature of secret worship, there is some circumstantial difference betwixt this, and that which is social and more public. As, that this is to be performed in some place of retirement, by a single

a single person, in the presence of none but God. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door upon thee, pray to thy Father which is in secret," saith Christ, Matt. vi. 6. It may differ also from social worship, as to the manner of performing it; for the use of the voice is not so necessary to one as to the other: nor need we be so closely confined to just order and method, and propriety of expression in our secret devotions, as when we pray in the family, and lead the worship of others. In our closet we may freely enlarge and dwell on some particular temptation, or want, or fear: we may there indulge the fervency of our spirits in repeating the same thing over and over, without incurring the blame of vain repetition: for so did Christ in his secret prayer, Matt. xxvi. 44. Neither are we so confined to gesture in the closet, as decency obligeth us to in public. When Christ prayed alone, we read, that he fell on his face on the ground, and that he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears. Such a posture and manner would have hardly been proper in the synagogue, or even in the family; but in secret it was proper enough. I may add also, that in secret we are not so confined to length and time, as we must be in the church and family, lest we should weary out the devotion of our fellow worshippers: but there, in the closet, the devout soul may enlarge, and plead, and wrestle with God as long as ever his heart will keep in frame, and his other affairs will allow of it. In these circumstances, secret worship differs from social, but in other respects it is much the same. The same acts of devotion, as prayer and praise, confession and thanksgiving, are equally proper in the family, and in the closet. There-

Therefore I need not further enlarge on the nature of secret worship. Let us,

Secondly, Attend to our obligations to practise this duty. And since the instruction of our Saviour Christ is so plain and express concerning it, Matt. vi. 6. I need not insist on any other argument, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," &c. He seems there to take it for granted, that no man, at least that no disciple of his, would live without secret prayer. He speaks of the matter as if there was no need to enjoin them so reasonable a duty; it was enough to direct them how to perform it in a right manner, as particularly to choose secret places of retirement for their "secret devotions; to enter into their closet, and shut the door upon them." That instruction has all the force of a command, and methinks something more than so; for it is presumed that every disciple of Christ will make conscience of secret prayer; he need not be exhorted to it, but only directed how. Do any then live in the neglect of this duty? to be sure they are none of Christ's disciples. A few words may therefore be sufficient under the next head, which is,

Thirdly, To press you to this duty of secret worship, for which I will hint the following motives; as,

1. The advantages of greater freedom, and of being more particular in our addresses to God in secret, than we can be when we pray with others, even with our own families, should greatly recommend this duty to us. The Christian has many things to say to his God, when alone, which would not be so proper to mention in the hearing of any fellow mortal. There are peculiar sins, and peculiar mercies, peculiar blessings, and cares, and sor-

rows, which are fit to have a place only in our closet devotions. It is there only the Christian can freely lament before God, all the vanity of his thoughts, and pray for help against his secret temptations. And is not this a very valuable privilege, which our heavenly Father indulges us in? That we may enter into our closet and shut the door upon us, and shut out the world and every creature, and there speak to him alone, and tell him all our hearts: it is such a privilege as, surely, no Christian can be without, and which no good person will make light of.

2. Secret worship is an excellent means to preserve a lively sense of religion in your souls, and to prevent a decay of the divine life. The daily confession of your most secret sins to God, and prayer for help and strength against your secret temptations, with the other acts of devotion which are proper for the closet, will necessarily lead you into an acquaintance with yourselves, and keep you from being strangers to your own hearts. It will put you on a frequent review of the frame and temper of your minds. It will help you to take notice of your first declensions, and to prevent the progress of them. Hereby, in a word, you will be daily improving in the divine life, in your acquaintance and communion with God; and so, by this means, you will be sensibly ripening, every day, for the future enjoyment of his presence, and for the heavenly life of glory. I will add,

3. That the constant and conscientious performance of this duty, is one of the best evidences of Christian sincerity; and without it, it can hardly be supposed that our hearts are right with God. Many worldly motives may, probably, prevail with a man to attend public worship, and even to pray in his family; as custom, example, and the reputation

putation of the thing ; but take a man alone in the closet, and there he will act agreeably to his real inclination. The Pharisees prayed in the synagogues, and in the corners of streets, on purpose to be seen of men, and applauded for their piety ; this was an argument of their hypocrisy : but if we make conscience of prayer when no eye sees us, either to applaud, or censure, it is a sign that we are not as the hypocrites are. It proves that the soul has received a divine touch, when it loves to converse with God alone, unseen, and unheard by all the world. So that the conscientious practice of this duty will afford you a very encouraging evidence of your sincerity, and thereby raise your hopes of heavenly blessedness. I will now shut up this whole discourse with giving you,

Fourthly, Some practical directions relating to the duty of secret worship. As,

1. I would advise you to be constant in it, every morning and evening, at least. A very warm devotion will hardly admit so large an interval, as twelve long hours, betwixt the seasons of sacred retirement. David and Daniel used stately to pray three times a day, Psalm lv. 17. Dan. vi. 10. and sometimes (perhaps on extraordinary occasions) still oftener ; “ seven times a day do I praise thee, “ because of thy righteous judgments,” says David, Psalm cxix. 164. Christ, indeed, hath not expressly told us how often we must enter into our closets and pray ; but, methinks, there is something of a natural fitness in it, that, at least, we should thus begin and end the day with God. It is a good and most reasonable thing, that we should “ shew forth his loving-kindness in the morning, “ and his faithfulness every night,” Psalm xcii. 2. Let prudence direct you to the most convenient

times and hours for secret devotion. I suppose it is generally a good rule in the morning; the sooner the better, however, before you engage your thoughts and labours about any worldly business. In the evening you are more at liberty; only let not the worship of the closet be delayed till you grow drowsy, and unfit for any thing but sleep.

2. I would advise you to be very serious in secret, as well as in public worship. When you enter into your closet, and have shut the door, remember that "your heavenly Father seeth in secret. "Thou, God, seekest me," would, methinks, be a very proper motto to be writ up in the closet; however, let the sense of it be impressed on your heart, every time you retire to worship God. "Remember, O my soul! that the eyes of the great God are now upon thee; remember what thou art now to do with him: watch against all manner of vain thoughts, and against a trifling and careless frame, in so great a presence, in so great a business."

3. I would advise you to be very particular in your secret prayers. There in your closet you should unbosom your whole heart to God, and spread all your sins, and sorrows, and wants before him. You may now do it safely, when none hears you, but God alone.

4. Let your outward conversation in the world be answerable to such a course of holy walking with God in secret. Let the good fruits of your secret converse with God shew themselves in your temper, and in all your behaviour. When you have been praying against some particular corruption, or temptation, let your future watch against it be more strict than ever; and let your converse with God and your own hearts in your retirement, dispose

pose you to a more holy converse with the world about you.

So shall you recommend the religion of the closet unto others, by bringing forth the good fruits of it; and as to yourselves, I am persuaded it will prove an excellent means of universal piety and growth in grace. You will, probably, meet with such communion with God, and such foretastes of heaven in it, as will not only fit you for, but make you long after the full possession of the heavenly felicity.

SERMON XXX.

Veneration for the name of God, and Swearing by it.

EXODUS xx. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

BEING now to treat of the universal veneration due to God's name, with the sins that are opposite to it, I have taken the third command of the decalogue for the foundation of my present discourse. For this command more fully comprehends all that relates to this subject than any single sentence in the scripture ; and being plainly of a moral nature, it has the same obligatory force on all to whom it is notified, as it had on the Jews to whom it was published.

In considering this point, I shall,

First, Explain the sense of the command, and the nature of that veneration for the name of God which

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which it aims at securing, by forbidding what is contrary to it.

Secondly, Observe the particular instances of this veneration, and of the sins which stand in opposition to it.

Thirdly, Offer some reasons and motives for our keeping this command.

I. I would endeavour to fix in general the true meaning of this command. Now the name of God signifies here, not as it sometimes does, God himself, in whom indeed all the regards or disregards of his name terminate, but the outward manifestations of him: for these can only suit with what is required of us in respect to his name, "not to take it in vain." And all of these, even every thing that God makes himself known by, or whatever is considered as peculiarly belonging and referring to him, his usual appellations, titles, attributes, and works, his worship and ordinances, his word and his people are included in the notion of God's name, according to the latitude that word bears in scripture. To "take God's name," that is, into the lips or mouth, which must be understood to make up the sense, and the phrase is used with this addition, Psalm l. 16. and xvi. 4. what is it but to mention the name of God in any way or form, and not that of swearing only, to which some would confine the sense? Nor should we exclude such actions that have the same force or signification as words have. *In vain* signifies to no end or purpose, as well as falsely and rashly. Sometimes also it seems to be used as a softer expression for a wicked end, as when the Psalmist joins these characters together of God's avowed enemies; "They speak against thee wickedly, and take thy name in vain." To take then God's name in vain, is
to

to mention, or in any manner to use, divine and sacred things without any good reason or end; without any suitable sentiments, marks, and design of respect to God; without any view and tendency to the real good of ourselves or others: or it is to use them to an evil and sinful purpose, and the direct dishonour of God. Thus it amounts to the same with profaning the name of God, which we find often forbidden in his word. On the contrary, the veneration of God's name consists in this, that while we religiously forbear the trifling and dishonourable use of this name, we use it seriously and reverently, as often as we do so at all; that is, so far as possible with an actual sense of God on our minds, and always with that gravity and composure in our words and behaviour, which is a known token of reverence, and proper to intimate our real belief and inward sense of the being and excellencies of God, as well as to promote it in ourselves and others: and both these must bear a proportion to the occasion and circumstances wherein the name of God is used.

I proceed now,

Secondly, To consider particular instances of the veneration or profanation of God's name, which may be ranged under these three classes.

I. Such as refer to religion and divine matters simply and immediately.

II. Such as fall out in civil affairs, or

III. In the common transactions of life.

1st. Several instances there are of the profanation of God's name which refer simply and directly to religion and divine matters. Of this sort the

1st, and most capital, is Blasphemy. Now this sin is committed, when by reproachful words, (or by actions implying the same thing) that which essentially

tially belongs to God, and in which his glory is nearly interested, is denied, renounced, insulted, or wished not to be; or else somewhat is imputed or wished to him which is contrary to his perfection and blessedness. This vile impiety, in its properest and fullest sense, arises from the object in conjunction with the temper and manner of acting against it. Yet it may be sufficient to constitute blasphemy, if its object is of that extent or importance as to lie at the very foundation of natural or revealed religion; whatever alleviating circumstances may attend it, such as ignorance, infirmity, surprize, and a mind void of any designed affront against God. So Paul scruples not to stile himself a blasphemer for what he did against the name and religion of Jesus, even ignorantly and from a false persuasion of his doing right; and he speaks of the saints as being compelled by him to blaspheme. However, we should be very cautious of charging this odious sin on persons for particular errors, though they are of a very high nature, and affect in their consequences the main frame of religion, while they disclaim those consequences and profess a sincere esteem for religion. On the other hand, the guilt of blasphemy is contracted chiefly from the spirit and manner in which sacred things are spoken and acted against; as whenever this carries in it a manifest and daring reproach, a wilful presumptuous slight and contempt, and a great deal of rancour and malignity, even though the whole of religion is not directly concerned in the attack: which, when it is, then is this horrid sin finished and wrought up to its highest pitch.

Besides this direct and proper blasphemy, there is also indirect blasphemy, which we are guilty of when we minister the occasion to others to blas-

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pHEME and speak evil of our holy religion, by any remarkable defects and blemishes in our moral character, at the same time that we practise the best and strictest forms of godliness. So David, on the account of his notorious fall, is charged with having "given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," 2 Sam. xii. 14. "Thus" was the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles, through the Jews breaking the divine law, whereof they made a boast," Romans ii. 23, 24. And St Paul sets this consideration as a guard on the good conversation of Christian women and servants, "lest the name of God and his word" and doctrine be blasphemed." Tit. ii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 1.

But this is near akin to a second instance of profaning God's name in matters of religion, and that is hypocrisy. This in the lower degrees of it, as when it is rather negative than positive, an insincerity or partiality in religion, rather than formal hypocrisy, when the profession proceeds from some real conviction, and has not so much a bad principle and end, as wants a good one, it is still no small abuse of things sacred; it is a very unworthy treatment of them, vastly below their nature and real excellency, which requires that they sway and engage the whole heart. But then hypocrisy, in the strict and proper sense, that is, when all the forms of godliness not only accompany a course of allowed immoralities, but are put on purely to act a part, to serve for a cloak or compensation of sin, and the better to promote worldly and wicked ends; this is so shameful and shocking a prostitution of divine things, so deliberate and solemn a mockery of God, that open irreligion is a far less affront and dishonour to him. Therefore "unto the wicked, God saith, "What
"halt

“ hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that
 “ thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?”
 Psalm l. 16.

3. Another and very large article of the profanation of God’s name, arises out of religious duties. But as the sins under this article have been taken notice of already in the preceding discourses on the worship of God, I pass them, and observe,

4. God’s name may several ways be taken in vain in discourse, and in other transactions about religion. Thus, if religious conversation should be introduced into those times and places, or company and affairs that are quite unsuitable, and will not admit of a serious regard to divine things, what is this but betraying them into contempt? The same piety and prudence which directs us to seize all opportunities of dropping a word for God and religion, where there is any prospect of doing good, forbids our casting these pearls before those who are only like to trample them under feet. Matt.vii. 6.

Again, another instance is a bold intrusion into the secrets of God’s nature or will, with a peremptory and dogmatical adherence to our religious opinions beyond their importance and evidence. When not satisfied with the simplicity of divine revelation, we affect to be wise above what is written, and aspire so to level the high and mysterious points of religion to our low and narrow capacities, as hardly to receive what is ever so plainly revealed which we do not perfectly comprehend: when we not only assume more than a modest and becoming assurance where we are most concerned, and have most reason to believe ourselves to be right, but will scarce allow ourselves capable of a mistake in any thing: when we arrogantly demand a reason of all that God

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does, as the only condition of our yielding to it; we certainly offer a great affront to the incomprehensible Majesty of God, and cast off that fear and distance, that humility and self-diffidence, which he expects us to observe in all we have to do with him. How contrary is this to that wise and pious protestation of David, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I ex-
 "ercise myself in great matters, or in things too
 "high for me." Psal. cxxxi. 1. The like temper holy Job came at length into, and repented in dust and ashes of his former rash and presumptuous judgments passed on the ways of God, Job xl. 3. 4. chap. xlii. 2—6. Thus also the place of God's visible presence among his people of old was fenced in against any nearer approach than he was pleased to assign. They were not to break through unto the Lord, when he appeared on mount Sinai, to gaze, lest many of them perish, Exod. xix. 21.

Further, it is a gross and flagrant abuse of the name of God, and things sacred, when they are applied, on very slight occasions, in pronouncing anathemas against those who differ from us in religion, and that especially to vent our own passions, to serve private worldly ends, and to become engines of persecuting the persons on whom they light. This sure must be a most unhallowed and wicked use of the name of the Lord, to make it the vehicle of firebrands, arrows, and death; and so to fetch fuel from heaven to spread a fire which has been kindled from hell. And yet thus the Romish church, to the everlasting scandal of the Christian name, which it pretends to engross, and to the offence and horror, one would think, of all serious persons, is continually dealing out the most terrible and bitter imprecations on such as profess

profess or act ever so little contrary to its formulary; it has annexed an anathema to every article of its long creed, which consists, for the most part, of antichristian unscriptural corruptions, against all who do not believe them; nay, and it sticks not at consecrating the most notorious crimes for its own service. O what a mercy it is that we are delivered from this communion! Thus while we have nothing to fear from the spiritual edge of their ecclesiastical weapons, which will in the end turn wholly against themselves, we happily are also out of the reach of the temporal edge of them. Nor are we under the temptation of bearing a part in their religious farce, and in so wanton and vile an usurpation of a sacred authority to patronize their own inventions, to dishonour God, and to oppress mankind.

Once more, in the management of free conferences, and debates about religion, there is great danger of dropping due reverence, through the eagerness and hurry of the spirits, which quickly carries us to speak of the great things of God in too familiar a way, or runs us into strife and contention, or into disputes for victory and vain glory, rather than for truth and godly edifying. Therefore a holy guard should be maintained on our spirits and lips, that when the work is good, and should employ Christians often, we may not mar it in the doing, and so at once lose the benefit to ourselves and others, and bring religion itself into disgrace.

There is another instance that would naturally come in here to be considered, and that is of vows. But these are near akin to oaths, which fall under the next head. They are much the same between God and a man's self, in regard to religious concerns, as an oath is between God, a man's self, and

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and other men, in regard to civil affairs, so that the application of what is said on the one, is easy to make to the other : I shall therefore now proceed to the

Ild Class of instances, wherein the name of God has due honour given to it, or is otherwise profaned ; and that is, when it is applied to civil purposes in swearing by it. Now swearing by the name of God, or an oath, is a solemn appeal to him by words, signs, or both together, as certainly knowing the truth or falsehood of what we declare, to do us good or evil, according to his almighty power, as we shall make a true or false declaration. And we may thus swear to facts past or present, which is called an assertory oath, or to the performance of somewhat in time to come, which is called a promissory oath. Swearing by the name of God on all proper occasions, is a branch of natural religion, and does honour to him by the acknowledgment of his omniscience, omnipotence, justice, and unchangeable life. Hence it follows, that to swear by any besides him in such manner as implies their having these perfections, and being capable of fully answering our appeals, would be utterly unlawful, and no less than idolatry. See Jeremiah v. 7. Deut. vi. 13. But then creatures may be introduced into an oath, without any proper appeal to them, as when something undoubtedly true of them at present is referred to as a pledge or security of the truth of what is sworn, or when we interest, as far as in us lies, such of them as are very dear to us, in the consequences of our appeal to God. Thus we find in scripture, even good persons swearing, or making strong asseverations by the life of others, without

without any intimation of blame. However, it is certainly safest and best, not to draw this practice into a precedent, but when we have a just occasion to confirm a thing further than our simple declaration, to make use of God's name alone to this end ; since the promiscuous application of the same forms to God and creatures carries the appearance of respect to the latter beyond what is due, and it may be so interpreted and used by others, without their observing the intended difference. Besides, the name of creatures, liable as all are to sudden changes, is very improper to give a sanction to our words ; nor have we a right in other persons to devote them to evil for our faults.

It further follows from the religion of an oath, that it is not only lawful, but highly proper and expedient to be used in many cases. In all civil societies, the strictest care should be taken, to find out in all judicial proceedings the truth of facts relating to the life, reputation, and properties of private persons, or to the welfare of the community, as well as to oblige men to fulfil many necessary and important engagements they come under. Now an oath is the strongest security that can be given or taken for men's speaking truly ; it is naturally apt to make them more deliberately consider what they depose or promise, when otherwise they might be in danger of transgressing the law of truth, merely through heedlessness and precipitancy ; it is proper also to strike an awe into those who have but little scruple of uttering a simple falsehood, while it is to be presumed that few would willingly take divine vengeance on themselves. How can an oath then be discharged from the great and weighty transactions of civil administration, without too much neglecting and exposing

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exposing public good and right on the one hand, and the honour of God on the other? For this is concerned even in securing that. It is also for the honour of God that he is openly acknowledged in all the considerable affairs of mankind; in which never to interpose his name looks like a renunciation of his providence over the world, and tends to wear out of the minds of the generality the natural sense of a deity, which is very much kept up by the due and prudent use of oaths? Hence therefore has the use of them on public and solemn occasions prevailed in all ages. It stands warranted and confirmed by the practice of the patriarchs, and of the whole body of the Jews, by God's own allowance and command. Lev. v. 1. chapter xix. 12. Deut. vi. 13. We hear St Paul several times swearing in a very solemn manner, Romans i. 9. chapter ix. 1. Galass. i. 20. 2 Cor. i. 23. chapter xi. 31. We find an angel lifting up his hand to heaven, and swearing by him that lives for ever and ever, Rev. x. 5, 6. And Christ himself answered to the high priest when he adjured him by the living God, which was the common form of administering and taking an oath among the Jews. Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. Mark xiv. 62. An oath also for confirmation is mentioned as a known and approved method among men of ending all strife, Heb. vi. 16. When our Lord therefore delivered that precept in his sermon on the mount, "Swear not at all," Matt. v. 34. which is afterwards inculcated in a very strong manner by St James, chapter v. 12. it is certain the design could not be to forbid absolutely all swearing on necessary and solemn occasions. But it only forbids all arbitrary and unnecessary swearing, as in common conversation, or in men's private dealings and transactions with one another.

And

And it forbids swearing in this manner by creatures, as well as by the Creator, to whom all oaths in the name of creatures, as our Lord shows, virtually and ultimately refer.

But let us now see what are the due qualifications of an oath, that it may be used to the honour of that sacred name which is invoked by it, and which, in the want of them, is abused and dishonoured. They are three, as we find them mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, iv. 2. viz. "judgment, righteousness, and truth."

1. An oath must be taken in judgment; that is considerately, and deliberately, in opposition to thoughtlessness and rashness. "Be not rash," says the wise man, "with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel that it was an error," as though that were an excuse for thy want of care to prevent it. Eccl. v. 2, 6. He makes it therefore the character of a good man, Eccl. ix. 2. "that he feareth an oath," as of a wicked man, that "he sweareth," that is, hastily, or at random, and without thinking of what he is doing. Here then our first care is seriously to weigh the matter and end of the oath proposed to us; whether it be of itself warrantable, and how far the knowledge we have of an affair will enable us to give evidence about it; what also is the extent of the engagements we are to come under by any promissory oath, and whether we can, or sincerely design, to the utmost of our power, to answer them all; and likewise whether there be worthy ends sufficient to bear us out in interposing the venerable name of God for a pledge of the truth of our declarations. Our next care should be about the manner, that it be

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with a solemnity suitable to an appeal to God, and with a present sense and awe of him on the mind.

Now, how contrary to this necessary caution and deliberation is the practice of many who swallow down oaths with as little concern as they do their meals; who have no thought or sense of God in what they are about; and who, instead of endeavouring to inform themselves as fully as they can, are willingly ignorant of what they swear about, perhaps from a vain imagination that they may thus elude the force and obligation of their oaths? What is this but trifling both with God and men, a present profanation of God's great name, and a direct step to a further profanation of it in breaking such oaths?

2. An oath must be taken in righteousness; that is, in things lawful and possible to us at the time of our swearing, or which we have a reasonable prospect of being able to do at the time set for performance. To bind ourselves by an oath to what is out of our power is playing with the divine name. To take an oath to do that which is directly sinful, as when forty Jews bound themselves with an oath to kill Paul, Acts xxiii. 12, 13. or to do that which has a manifest tendency to an evil end, or which prevents our doing the good we ought, of which kind were those oaths or vows which the Jewish doctors allowed, but our Saviour condemned, for alienating even from parents what should be employed for their benefit, Matt. xv. 5, 6. this is impiously to convert the most sacred bond, and what should be only a bond of equity, into a bond of iniquity. Therefore should any be unhappily ensnared with such oaths as these, which are in themselves null and void, and oblige, as one says, to nothing but to repent of and re-
nounce

nounce them, he must not choole two evils at once, by adding the sin of keeping to the sin of making them, as Herod most wickedly did in beheading John the Baptist; for his oath's sake, Mark vi. 23. 26.; but after the better example of David, when he had passionately sworn destruction to all Nabal's house, 1 Samuel xxv. 21, 32,—35. all thoughts and preparation toward the execution should immediately be laid aside.

3. An oath must be taken in truth; that is, first with a present conformity of the inward sentiments of the mind to the words of the oath in their common obvious sense, and, as understood by those that exact it, or for whose sake it is taken; without any equivocation, mental reserves, or secret meaning of our own. The sin of perjury, in its worst sense, is directly in opposition to this exact and fair correspondence between our hearts and lips; that is, when we know in our consciences things are otherwise, or know not that they are so, as on oath we declare, or when we never design to do what we solemnly swear to perform. A horrid and shocking sin this, which at once dissolves the strongest bands of humanity and religion! While it divests God's name of all its awful and adorable glories, and insolently defies him, as if he were ignorant of men's thoughts and actions, or had pleasure in falsehood and iniquity, as if he were too feeble or else too easy to inflict a deserved punishment; it borrows credit and authority from this very name, as known to be held in veneration by others, to vouch lies more securely, and promote injustice and mischief under a divine sanction. Can any thing offer a viler affront, an higher contempt, to infinite Majesty?

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Farther, in all promissory oaths, our words must be followed and confirmed by a punctual and strict performance. To fail in the deed, even though the intention was good, is real perjury, as well as to fail in both: and though the former being single, is not so bad as the latter, which is double perjury, yet it is worse than perjury in the intention, which an after repentance prevents from becoming actual. Our very word itself, and much more the oath of God with it, lays so firm a bond on our consciences, that it is not in our power afterwards to reverse it ourselves. Others, to whom all the right passes by our obligation, and superiors, in case our power in the matter be subjected to them, may cancel it; and the obligation will determine of itself, on failure of the condition expressed or necessarily implied in it. But excepting these cases, and that of the obligation being in itself unlawful, an oath is an indispensable tie on us to do simply and fully what we have ratified by it, without indirect evasions and forced interpretations, contrary to the genuine sense and design, even could they be reconciled to the literal words of it. To make use of such evasions would be to "swear deceitfully," Psalm xxiv. 4. and, instead of dissolving, bind the perjury more. Not to enter on nice and intricate cases, this is certain, that an oath is always binding against a man's own temporal interest; so that though great disadvantages should accrue from keeping the oath, they will not warrant his breaking it. If he happen to swear to his own hurt, he must not change, as it is the character of a good man that does not, Psal. xv. 4. How inexcusable then is the guilt and perjury of those who break through their oaths without even the pretence of loss,

loss, merely for the sake of making advantages they have renounced by them?

I go on now briefly to touch upon a

Illd Class of instances of profaning the name of God, that is, in common conversation. Thus when it is brought into conversation under the forms of swearing, or dreadful imprecations on the speaker himself and others, to confirm almost every indifferent assertion, and to convey all the significations of his will and desire, and expressions of his passions and mirth to his fellow-creatures; when men use it in a way of blessing themselves and others, in a slight, transient, and careless manner, or in a way of exclamation, to vent sudden admiration, or as an expletive to fill up a sentence; certainly in all these ways the name of God is treated in a very rude and irreverent manner, which is quite inconsistent with any becoming sense of God, or edification of men; and hereby it is turned into a mere byeword, or, to say the best, an empty unmeaning sound. And can any that have any real and serious belief of a Deity, think that such an use of his name is fit and proper? Let me add, that where it is not thus directly spoke out, but couched under minced and disguised expressions used for it, under the name of any creature or thing supernumerary to the sentence, or under any modes of wishing, that necessarily imply a connection with it, even so it is in effect profaned, and God is dishonoured.

A few reasons and motives, levelled especially against what has been last mentioned, which is a reigning evil in our times, being the third thing proposed, shall shut up this discourse. And, *1st, Then,*

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1st, Then; let us consider, that the profanation of God's name in any way is undoubtedly a very great sin; it is most clearly forbidden by the law of God, and is highly dishonourable to him. One word sure need not be said to convict ~~the~~ blacken perjury, hypocrisy, and blasphemy. Such arrows, shot immediately against Heaven, such execrable abuses of what is sacred, are sure marks of hardened and abandoned wretches, who are condemned by their own conscience, unless scared with an hot iron, as well as by the whole world, and who carry the prints of hell on their foreheads. And yet how nearly does common swearing and cursing, with the light tossing of God's name on the lips on every occasion, approach and lead to some of these flagrant impieties? When men have long trifled with the name of God, and accustomed themselves to talk of him familiarly, without any reverence, and to no purpose at all, is it not very easy and natural for them not to feel any reverence or awe of God on the most solemn occasions of using his name, and to apply it to very bad purposes? How little distant is cursing by God's name from direct blasphemy? and what should restrain one that has the hardness to do this continually, openly to reproach and blaspheme his Maker, when he fancies (as he is soon apt to do) that God has done him an injury? How often is the common swearer insensibly ensnared in the sin of perjury, by vouching with oaths all his words and promises, rashly enough uttered, and without much regard to truth? And can he be thought to have any great aversion to the tents of those that swear falsely in public? How manifestly does the want of due deference to God in interweaving his name into ordinary discourse, tend utterly to prevent all serious sense of God in the exercises of religion,

religion, and so dispose men to mere formality and hypocrisy in the worship of God? Besides, does not the very light of nature dictate the treating sacred things differently from common, and never without reverence? From which principle, many of the wiser heathens have condemned common swearing, and recommended a simplicity of language in conversation. And it is most certain our Lord does this, in Matt. v. 34—37. adding as a reason, that whatsoever is more than plain and naked expressions, in our ordinary communication, cometh of evil; it resolves into some bad principle, as well as leads to more evil.

2. Let us consider, that the profanation of God's name is an iniquity without any cause or temptation; I mean the slight use of it in conversation. A gainful trade is indeed sometimes carried on by hypocrisy and perjury; and yet this is so very scandalous and infamous, that one should think it would give little satisfaction at present to those who deal in it; and we are sure it will turn to their terrible loss hereafter. But what profit or pleasure can there be in throwing out the name of God with every thing men speak? What appetite or inclination in nature can this gratify, unless it be the inward enmity of the heart against God? And indeed nothing looks more like sinning for sin's sake, and on purpose to do dishonour to God. It might else well puzzle a wise man, as one says, to give a tolerable reason why this sin should ever be committed at all. None, as the same author observes, is born with a swearing constitution. All the pretended reasons for this practice do so defeat themselves, or make one sin the plea for another, that one cannot believe those who alledge them really think them of any weight; and they only more evidently show that this is truly and above all others

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thers a causeless and needless transgression. And wilt thou then go on, sinner, in this way of profaneness, to the certain provocation of God, to the offence of all good people, and to the hazard of thy soul; when it gains thee nothing, and when the leaving it would lose thee nothing, and is so easy by the grace of God, and thy watchful endeavours?

5. Let us often consider the tremendous majesty of God; how glorious and dreadful is this name, *the LORD our GOD!* Deut. xxviii. 58. "Holy and reverend is his name," Psalm cxi. 9. How jealous is he of his honour? How adorable as Creator and Lord of all? How were all his awful and venerable glories displayed in full harmony with the riches of his grace in the cross of Christ? With what prostrate devotion do the blessed angels bow down at God's name? It makes the devils tremble, and will prove a heavy burden on all that take it in vain, and repent not.

For, 4. This sin has many severe threatenings denounced against it in God's word, which will be as severely executed on those that allow themselves in it. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that take his name in vain." He will be a swift witness against false, nay and rash swearers, Mal. iii. 5. and chap. ii. 2. "If ye will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you." This is a sin that God will not let go unpunished, tho' men too often wink at it; whereas in some of the grosser kinds, it is an iniquity to be punished by a human judge: and its abounding and prevailing without restraint often draws down judgments from Heaven on a country. "Because of swearing shall a land mourn," Hos. iv. 2, 3. Jer. xxiii. 10. However men now lightly and rudely sport with the awful name of God, or boldly defy it; a day of reckon-
ing

ing will come, when they shall pay dear for all their false or common oaths, and other indecent liberties taken with it. They shall find the vengeance of this name a most serious and intolerable thing, which will pierce them too with the more bitter anguish and vexation, as their consciences must own it just, and themselves without excuse, who have set at nought all this vengeance, or invited it down on their own heads.

5. And lastly, let it be considered how extremely unsuitable the sins of this sort are to the state of men in the present world. Oaths, curses, blasphemies, with all profane despiteful usages of God, are in hell the effects, and a part of the punishment of wretched and miserable creatures: they are the natural growth of that place of torment and despair. And should they not in all reason and propriety be confined to it, and not pass out from thence into our world, which is so full of the riches of God's goodness, and admits of hope in his mercy for the worst of sinners? Is it not a pity and a shame, that what is extorted there from sense of pain and utter hopelessness should here flow out of ease and fullness of condition, and a wanton gaiety of spirit? Ah! profane sinner, why wilt thou thus reverse thy state and character? Why wilt thou wear the badge of hell before thou comest thither, and whither thou never mayest come? Why wilt thou, by multiplying these hellish vices, declare thyself in effect one abandoned of God, when yet there is room for thy admission into his favour after all thy provocations, through faith in the blood of Jesus, and sincere repentance?

To conclude: let us be thankful to God, if we have any of us escaped the fouler pollutions of his holy name, yet humble ourselves for our staining it so often in a variety of other instances. Let us

58 *Veneration for the Name of God, &c.*

Take sanctuary in the Mediator's righteousness which has done complete honours to this name, and atoned for the dishonours we daily offer to it. Let us beg a deeper impression of the fear of God on our hearts to command them into a constant reverence for him; and let us use our utmost influence to stop profaneness in others, and mourn for these abominations so greatly abounding in our land.

SER.

39 1
SERMON XXXI.

The Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath.

GENESIS II. 3.

And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

IN the history of the creation of the world and the beginning of mankind Moses gives us an account of the appointment of a Sabbath, or one day in seven, that should be sanctified or separated from the common affairs of this life, devoted to the purposes of religion, and receive a peculiar blessing from God. I think it cannot be reasonably supposed (as some writers have done) that the sacred historian would take such special notice in this place of a certain day which was not appointed at that time, but which should be appointed and sanctified and blest among the Jews two thousand four hundred years afterwards. It is probable that the most ancient patriarchs did, according to this early appointment, observe it as a day of rest from labour, and of the worship of God their Creator. And it is very evident that if it were lost among the na-

tions, it was renewed again by Moses to the people of Israel, with many particular sanctions: and there is still one day in seven continues in the New Testament to be a day of Christian worship observed by the apostles and first disciples. So that upon the whole survey of the dispensations of God to men, as they are recorded in the Bible; "it seems highly probable that there is some Sabbath, or one day in seven divinely appointed, both for the rest of man and the worship of God, which has run through all dispensations both before and after Moses, and which must remain to the end of the world."

It is impossible in the compass of one short sermon to run through all the reasonings* that are necessary to confirm this doctrine; yet that I may give some short hints toward the proof of a Sabbath running through all ages, I desire you will consider the following particulars:

1. What was the time when the first appointment of a Sabbath-day was given to men, and who were the persons to whom it was given? Was it not in Paradise, as soon as ever man was created, that God claimed one day in seven for his own worship, as well as gave it unto Adam for his rest and release from labour in the garden of Eden? Now there is at least as much reason and as much need for all the sons of Adam in all ages and nations, in their feeble and sinful state, to have a day appointed for their own rest, and for the worship of their God, as there was for Adam himself in Paradise and in a state of innocence; for his body

was
These reasonings are now published in a book, entitled,
"The Holiness of Times, Places, and Persons, under the
Jewish and Christian dispensations, considered and compared."
"red." 1738.

was then in perfection of health and vigour, and his mind more inclined to remember God and worship him.

2. Consider the original reason that is given for one day in seven to be sanctified; and this seems to confirm the perpetuity of it. God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation: the Sabbath was given to man to put him in mind of the creation of the world by the true God in six days, and to do honour to God the Creator. But all mankind in all ages, as well as Adam their Father, should preserve this truth in their remembrance: and the continual return of a seventh day of rest is an everlasting memorial of it, and gives opportunities continually for paying homage to that almighty Being that made us.

3. Consider the place which this command of the Sabbath bears in the law of God, when it was renewed and enjoined to the nation of Israel: this doth in the opinion of most divines add considerable weight to this argument. It is one of the commands of the moral law that was pronounced by the mouth of God himself on Sinai, with much glory and terror: it stands amongst those laws in Exodus xx. which are conceived to be moral and perpetual, except in some small limitations and accommodations to the Jewish state. "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," &c. It was written with the rest in the two tables of stone, which perhaps in that typical dispensation might denote perpetuity, and that it must last like a rock for ever. It was written by the finger of God himself, which gives a peculiar honour to it, and it was laid up in the ark of the covenant on which God dwelt in a bright cloud, or a blaze of glory behind the cloud; and thus it was put under
God's

God's own eye and care, together with those laws which are of perpetual obligation.

It is granted indeed, that in the books of Moses there are some peculiar rigours and ceremonies, and severe prohibitions of every earthly work under capital penalties added to the Sabbath, and enjoined to the Jews; but these do not belong to the Sabbath considered in itself, but are properly the ceremonial and Jewish appendages of it.

4. When the apostles by divine appointment had abolished all the Jewish Sabbaths, and all those ceremonies and peculiar austerities which belonged to the observation of the seventh day in the Jewish state, Gal. iv. and Coloss. ii. yet "they still practised the observation of one day in seven, even the first day the week, for Christian worship, and they taught it to the churches." It was on the first day when the "disciples met together with the door shut for fear of the Jews," that the Saviour arose appeared to them more than once, John xx. 19, &c. and 30. It was on this day that Pentecost fell out on that year, when the Spirit was poured down upon the disciples, as learned men assure us by their calculations, and then were three thousand converted at Peter's Sermon, Acts ii. 1—4, 41. It was on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread at Troas, and Paul preached to them. Acts xx. 7. It is on this day that St Paul gives orders for a collection for the saints, or at least that every one should then lay by him in store for this purpose, in Cor. xvi. 1, 2. This same order he gave also to the churches of Galatia. Thus the collection for the poor, which was made in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath, seems to be transferred

transferred to the first day of the week among Christians.

Let it be further added, that the religious appointment and observation of the first day of the week was so universal and so well known, that it acquired an honourable title in early times, and was called the *Lord's day*, Revelations i. 10, even as the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine was called the *Lord's supper*, both having a reference to the appointment and the honour of our blessed Saviour, 1 Cor. xi. 20, 23. This practice also was continued by all who professed the Christian religion in the primitive times; and they were known and distinguished from the Heathens as well as from the Jews by this particular character of observing the Lord's day. If we take all these things together, they give us a great deal of reason to infer that our blessed Saviour himself appointed the celebration of this day, and gave the apostles notice of it, among the rest of those things which he taught them in the forty days after his resurrection, when he appeared to them, conversed with them, "and instructed them" "in things that pertained to the kingdom of God," or the institution or support of his visible church, Acts i. 3.

5. Consider the reasonableness and the necessity of such an appointment in order to keep up religion in the world, as well as to give rest to the animal bodies of men and beasts. This is another proof of the morality or perpetuity of it. The seasons of worship which men would have chosen, and even of natural rest, which some men would have allowed either to themselves or their servants, probably would have been short and few enough, if God had not always devoted one day in seven to these purposes. It is evident in common experience,

ence, and by observation made upon persons and churches, and nations, that where no Sabbath is observed, where one day in seven is not separated to God by a rest from the usual labours of life and a dedication to his service, religion is in a very decaying state, and in great danger to be lost. As it is a common confession of persons who fall into the vilest crimes, and are executed by the public justice of the magistrate, that their disregard of the Sabbath was the beginning of their guilt and ruin, and led the way to all iniquity; so a careful observation of one day in seven for religious purposes has been the great spring and support of virtue and piety amongst mankind, and the constant guardian of it in its purity and power.

Now if all these considerations put together will but go so far as to make it highly probable that one day in seven has been always the proportion of time which God has appointed for a Sabbath, *i. e.* "for rest from labour and divine worship," this probability as to the time and manner of a duty should go for evidence, where no further evidence can be procured, and where the duty itself is clear and certain: and since some rest from labour, and some seasons for worship are necessary, we cannot do a more reasonable thing than to separate that proportion of time which the wisdom of God has certainly separated in some of his dispensations to men, and most probably in all of them.

Before we proceed, it will be necessary to answer a few enquiries.

Quest. 1. Why was the first day of the seven appointed for Christian worship rather than any of the others?

Ans.

Ans. When God rested from his work of creation, he appointed the seventh day for the ancient Sabbath, to keep in mind the Creator of the world and his work; and so when Christ rested from his works of redemption, he appointed the first day, even the day on which he arose from the grave, as most proper to keep the great work of our redemption in memory. That the first day of the week was observed by the apostles and first Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ and the finishing of their redemption, is evident from several hints of scripture, and many plain expressions in the history of the primitive church*.

I might add here also, that as the redemption or rest from Egyptian bondage given them by God and Moses is mentioned in Deut. chap. v.

VOL. II.

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* There have been some very great and learned men who suppose that the apostle Paul in the 4th chapter to the Hebrews builds a Christian Sabbath on this principle. See verse 4. "He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise; And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." verse 7. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." For if Jesus (that is Joshuah) had given them rest," *i. e.* if he had given them all the complete rest in the land of Canaan which was typified by the Jewish Sabbath, "then he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest (or *Sabbatism*, as the Greek word is), there remaineth the keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God; for he that is entered into his rest (which they refer to Jesus Christ in the work of redemption), he hath also ceased or rested from his own works as God did from his." See Dr Owen in his treatise of the Sabbath. Thus the Son of God the Redeemer is supposed to have appointed a day or Sabbath to celebrate his rest from his labours and sufferings, as God the Father the Creator did when he rested from his works.

as one reason of the Jewish Sabbath; so our greater redemption by Christ, or rest from the bondage of sin and Satan, being on this day completed, seems by parallel reasoning to be a proper argument for observing the Christian Sabbath.

Besides, it is worthy of our notice, that by chusing the first day of the seven for a Sabbath after the seventh day was abolished, there remains still one day in seven to perpetuate the memory of the creation, and it is the first day of the seven to perpetuate the memory of the work of redemption. Thus our Lord's day includes both.

Quest. 2. But what need is there of a whole day devoted to this purpose under the New Testament? Is it not enough to perform Christian worship in public assemblies, and thereby answer the purposes of the day, without observing that day as a Sabbath or day of rest?

Answer, It is too evident an observation, that unless the whole day be separated from the business and pleasures of this life, the hours and minutes of worship will for the most part be but poorly improved, and become much less profitable to our spiritual interest. It is hardly possible to attain the highest and best ends of preaching and hearing, praying and praising, administering and receiving of the Lord's supper, if we come into the sanctuary with our heads and hearts full of the affairs of this life, and all our earthly cares buzzing about our souls. And how much less good will a sermon do us, if, as soon as the hour of worship is ended, we run immediately from God and plunge ourselves into worldly affairs, without giving our thoughts leisure and leave to reflect on what we have heard? And much worse would

would it be still for religion if we spent the rest of the day in recreations and sports; for these carnalize the spirit, and estrange it from God and things heavenly much more than the common labours of life.

Alas! how difficult a matter do we find it to disengage our thoughts from this world when we come into the presence of God, even though we have a day appointed for this purpose! How hard is it to shake off all the dust of this earth when we would arise to God in devotion! And though we have bid farewell to our secular concerns the night before, and have had a long interval of sleep to divide our thoughts from this vain and busy life, yet how do the weighty cares of it hang continually on our spirits, or the trifles and amusements of it hover and play about our souls, and divert our hearts from the exercise of godliness! And let us think with ourselves how much harder it would be to fulfil the duties of the sanctuary with any good success, to improve public worship to our further acquaintance with God and things heavenly, to our greater delight in him, our mortification of sin and our growth in holiness, if there were no time devoted to religion but only that hour or two while we are at church. How would the words of the preacher run off from our souls, like a stream of oil gliding over a marble, if there were no recollection to fix it in our memory? How easily would Satan pluck up the good seed that was sown in the heart, if we join to assist him by giving a loose immediately to the cares or delights of this life, and call them to break in upon us when the sermon is ended? We may reasonably conclude, if Christ appointed the first day of the week for a season of the worship of God, he appointed it al-

so to be a season of rest from the cares and labours of this life, that this worship might be better performed, and the great ends of it best secured.

Quest. 3. When must the Christian begin his Sabbath, or the Lord's day? how must it be spent, and when must it end?

Here *I answer*, That whatsoever is the usual and customary beginning and ending of the days of common labour and business in the nation where we live, such should be the beginning and ending of the Lord's day or day of rest. The one day of rest answers to the six days of labour in the words of the fourth command, and must begin and end like them.

The Jews began their day at the evening or setting sun, and it ended the next evening. The nations of Europe where we dwell begin and end the day at twelve o'clock at midnight. But as the design of rest and worship on the Lord's day is to bear a proportion of one in seven to the business and labours of life on the other six days, we may reasonably suppose that the command never requires any thing more than that the same hours be spent at home or abroad, in public or private, for the general purposes of religion upon the Lord's day; which are spent in the common affairs of life on other days; and consequently, that the time which is devoted to eating and sleeping, and the necessities of nature and short intervals of refreshment on other days, may be employed to the same purposes on this day also. Public worship seems to be the chief design of the day; but when we are not engaged in public worship, we need not be, and indeed we ought not to be idle, but we should employ ourselves (as far as health and other circumstances will allow) in reading or hearing
divine

divine things at home, in prayer, singing psalms alone, or in families, in meditation, in holy conferences, or any of those actions which have a more direct and immediate tendency to the knowledge and worship of God, to the improvement of religion and virtue, and to our preparation for the everlasting rest and worship of heaven.

Quest. 4. May we not labour or work on the Lord's day to preserve ourselves from imminent dangers or threatening calamities, or to do good to the miserable or the helpless? &c.

I answer, That works of necessity and of mercy were not excluded on this day, even under the rigours of Judaism, where rest seems to be the primary or most obvious design of the Sabbath; and much less should those necessary and merciful works be excluded in the Christian dispensation, where the chief design is not bodily rest, but worship; such works, I mean, as leading cattle to drink, giving them fodder, sailing a ship, quenching a fire, stopping inundations of water, defending a town or city that is invaded by enemies, resisting an assault, raising cattle out of a pit whereinto they are fallen, relieving the distressed, nursing the sick, and taking care of children. In short, there is nothing of this kind forbidden, even though it may in a great measure sometimes hinder the proper work of the day, which is religion and worship; for "God will have mercy and not sacrifice. Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath, and his disciples rubbed out the corn from the ears when they were hungry;" and though the Pharisees reproved them, yet the Lord pronounced them blameless. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Luke vi. 15.

John

John v. 8, 9. Even the infirm man who was healed was ordered by our Saviour "to take up his bed and walk," as a proof of his cure. "The Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath," and he still more abates the severities of it when the Jewish dispensation is finished.

Under the New Testament we have no such strict and severe prohibitions of every care and labour in the common returns of the Lord's day, where they do not interfere with the primary design of it, that is, the worship of God and our best improvement thereby. As I would not bind new burdens on the servants of Christ, so neither would I release what Christ has bound. And therefore I say, where the necessary labours of a few in some part of the Lord's day, by providing food and other conveniences of life, render many more persons capable of spending the day in religion, I cannot find that the New Testament forbids it. I say, in some part of the Lord's day, for I think none ought to be so constantly employed in secular affairs as to exclude the whole day from its proper business, that is, religion or devotion, unless in the cases of necessity before-mentioned. I think it may be maintained in general, that, as whatsoever tends to destroy or nullify the great designs of religious worship should be omitted on the Lord's day, so some lesser labours which tend to make the performances of religion more easy, cheerful, and regular to ourselves, and to great numbers of others, may safely be performed on this day without a sinful violation of it. But wheresoever the conscience is doubtful, it is best to choose the safer side. "Hap-
py is he that condemneth not himself in what he
alloweth." Rom. xiv. 22.

And

And I would take leave to add here also, that as it is a day of sacred rest and refreshment, we are not called to draw out the duties of worship to such unreasonable and tiresome lengths, nor to be so incessant and uninterrupted in works of religion on this day, as would overmuch fatigue the spirits and overpress animal nature. This does not tend to the edification of men or the honour of God; but it has a certain and evident tendency to prejudice younger persons against the observation of the Lord's day, if we render the services of it too irksome and tedious. According as our constitution is more or less healthy, or our circumstances in the world, as servants or masters, as poor or rich, call us more or less to necessary works on this day, so we are to employ ourselves in the affairs of religion at such hours, and with such intervals of release and refreshment, as that the Sabbath of the Lord may be a pleasure to us, and may not overtire feeble nature instead of giving it rest. We should all employ this day to the designs and ends appointed, to the honour of God and our risen Saviour not with Jewish rigours and superstitious abstinences, not in indulgence of the flesh, and lazy idleness, not in sports and pastime, but with Christian wisdom improve our time for religious purposes, according to our capacities and stations, knowing that we are in a state of gospel liberty, freed from a state and spirit of bondage, and rejoicing in the Lord our Deliverer and Saviour.

This leads me to some practical exhortations.

1. Delight in the Lord's day as an high privilege bestowed upon you: make it the matter of your holy joy. Give thanks to God your Creator, who has not suffered you to wear out all your time in the drudgeries of this world, and the cares and toils

toils of a mortal state, but has appointed one day in seven for your release from the business of earth and your employment in the work of heaven. Give thanks to Jesus your Redeemer, who on this day finished the work of your redemption, and arose from the dead; and as those which are risen with Christ, set your "affections on the things that are above, where Christ is at the right hand of God." Col. iii. 1, 2. "This is the day which the Lord has made, we will be glad and rejoice therein." Psal. cxviii. 24. Bless his holy name, that he has appointed Christians to assemble themselves together for divine and heavenly purposes on this day, and be not the last in those assemblies, because if you are frequently so, it looks as if you had no mind to attend upon them at all.

Give thanks again to God the Creator and Governor of the world, who has fixed your birth and habitation in a land wherein the Lord's day is observed, and wherein there are laws to guard the observance of it; so that you are not disturbed and hindered by the sons of wickedness in the practices of religion on this day. This is a distinguishing favour which you enjoy above the Christians of the primitive ages, who dwelt under Heathen princes, where they had much ado to observe any Sabbath, or to employ the Lord's day in religious practices, while the whole nation around them was engaged, either in the busy affairs of this mortal life, or in vile idolatry and superstition.

Do not say, concerning the duties of worship on this day, as the Jewish hypocrites did in the days of the prophets Amos and Malachi, "Behold, what a weariness is it, and when will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat and sell corn?" Mal. i. 13. Amos viii. 5. Do not so much

much enquire what earthly business may I do on this day without sin, as what is there I can omit till to-morrow? what worldly business can I be excused from doing on God's holy day? This will discover a truly religious temper indeed, and shew that you delight in the things of God more than in things carnal or earthly.

2. Dispose of your earthly affairs wisely in the foregoing week, so that if possible you may not have the Lord's day, which is a day of rest and worship, invaded and intrenched upon by the cares and business of this world. Endeavour to quit yourselves of them so early the foregoing evening, that they may not cut short your hours of sleep that night, and thereby render you listless and drowsy upon the day appointed for worship. There is a great deal of Christian prudence and discretion to be seen in such a disposal of our worldly businesses, as may give us full leisure for God and heavenly things upon the Lord's day; that when our thoughts are rising up to our risen and ascended Saviour, we may not feel the cares of life hang about them like so many clogs and chains to drag us downwards, and divide our hearts from God and our Saviour again.

3. Think of the promises which are made to those who with a religious care serve and worship God upon his appointed day. There are some very gracious words of this kind spoken to the Jews, and may with equal justice be applied to those who observe the day of God's appointed rest, for the spiritual purposes of it under every dispensation. Isaiah lvi. 1, &c. "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" which words have a plain reference to the gospel state. "Blessed is the man that

“ keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it ; the sons
 “ of the stranger who join themselves to the Lord
 “ to serve him and to love his name, every one
 “ that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and
 “ taketh hold of my covenant, I will bring them
 “ to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in
 “ my house of prayer : their sacrifices shall be ac-
 “ cepted upon mine altar : I will give them, in my
 “ house and within my walls, a place and a name
 “ better than that of sons and daughters.” And
 in the lviiiith chapter of the same prophecy, and
 13th verse, “ If thou turn away thy foot from
 “ the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my ho-
 “ ly day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy
 “ of the Lord honourable, and shalt honour him,
 “ not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine
 “ own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,
 “ then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and
 “ I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy
 “ father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken
 “ it.” And there has been a multitude of instances,
 even under the gospel, wherein the blessings of the
 upper and the lower world have been plentifully
 poured in upon those who have observed the day
 of the Lord, and spent it to the sacred purposes
 for which it was designed. Their basket and their
 store have been sensibly enlarged and increased
 by a divine blessing, and their souls have received
 much of the dew of heaven, have brought forth a-
 bundant fruits of holiness, and been fitted in an e-
 minent degree for the business and blessedness of
 the upper world. Our famous English judge, Sir
 Matthew Hales, has left it upon record as his own
 experience.

4. Whatsoever spiritual advantages or improve-
 ments you obtain on God's own day, take care that
 you do not lose them again amidst the labours of the

the pleasures of the following week. John Ep. ii. 8.

"Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things
"that we have wrought," *i. e.* That ministers may not
lose their labours in preaching, nor the disciples lose
theirs in hearing. Treasure up something on every
Christian Sabbath that may add to your spiritual riches,
your knowledge, your faith, your zeal, your hope.
It is a day appointed for the enriching of your souls:
let not the cares of the world bury those treasures,
or rob you of them. Take large steps towards the
heavenly world on that day, and see that you be
not drawn back again by the allurements or the
toils of this mortal state. Maintain that favour and
relish of divine things, that holy nearness to God
and heaven, as far as possible, amidst the busi-
ness of life, which you have gained amidst the or-
dinances of the sanctuary. Thus you will have a
sort of sanctification spread over all your earthly af-
fairs, and you will walk with God in them all.

5. Take notice what relish and satisfaction you
find in the duties or services of the Lord's day, and
let that be a test whereby you may judge of the sanc-
tification of your souls, and your preparation for hea-
ven. I grant, those who are fatigued and overpressed
with the labours of this life may be well pleased
with a day of rest from labour, from mere princi-
ples of nature, and the desire of ease or idleness:
But do they love the work of a Lord's day? Do they
delight in Christian worship? Do they rejoice to
remember a risen Saviour? Do they take pleasure
in the remembrance of God in his glorious works
of creation and redemption, and converse with him
with a holy satisfaction in prayer, in praise, and o-
ther religious exercises? Let us enquire, my friends,
how it stands with us in this respect. Are we glad
of a day of rest and release from the business of this
life, that we may be more at leisure for God? Or

Could we be well enough pleased if there were no Sabbaths? Are the ordinances of worship our delight? Do we take pleasure in devotion and practical godliness? Do the things of inward religion relish well with us? Are they our pleasure and our joy?

What shall we do in heaven if we are not possessed of this temper, if our spirits are neither suited to the blessedness nor business of it; and if this world, with the cares and pleasures of it, be our chief delight? And how can we expect to be ever fit for heaven, which is a state of everlasting separation from the businesses of this world, and the perpetual enjoyment of God and Jesus the Saviour, if we do not make some advances towards this temper on every Lord's day that returns, which separates us from the world, and is designed to bring us toward God?

In the last place, I would add, let every Lord's day, every Christian Sabbath, lead your meditations, your faith and hope, onward to the eternal rest in heaven and the glorious worship of that world. Amidst all the fatigues and cares of this life, amidst all the interruptions you feel in your devotions here, and the inroads that are made upon your religious employments and joys, even on God's own day, yet still rejoice in the view and hope of that state where you shall find everlasting rest, a Sabbath which never ends, and be for ever employed in divine exercises, without the weariness of flesh or spirit. Alas! how soon are our souls tired here, or rather our animal natures, with spiritual exercises? How dull and drowsy is this flesh of ours? How do we feel our hearts ever wandering from our God and his worship? But there you shall behold the great God with steady fixation of soul on him, even that God who created all things in six days, and shall give him the honour of that creation in an immortal

tal Sabbath. There you shall see the blessed Jesus who rose from the dead on the first Christian Sabbath, who fulfilled his work of redeeming you from worse than Egyptian bondage, and laid the foundation of the new creation, even of new heavens and of a new earth. There you shall find complete and perpetual rest from all that is sinful and all that is painful; you shall enjoy a day of glorious and blissful worship in communion with the holy and happy inhabitants of that world; and it must be an everlasting day, for there is no night there.

SER.

SERMON XXXII.

Of fearing God, and trusting in him.

PSALM XXXI. 19.

*O how great is thy Goodness which thou hast laid up
for them that fear thee ; which thou hast wrought
for them that trust in thee, before the Sons of
Men !*

THE Psalmist complains, in the former part of this psalm, that his life was spent with grief, and his years with sighing ; that his strength failed, and his bones were consumed, while his enemies were taking counsel to destroy him ; but says he, “ I trusted in thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hands : ” and for the encouragement of his faith, he calls to remembrance the wonderful deliverances God had wrought for him in times past, and the unspeakable goodness that was still in reserve for all who should hereafter fear and trust him. “ O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them
“ that

“that trust in thee, before the sons of men!” From these words I propose,

First, To explain the duties of fearing God, and trusting in him. And,

Secondly, To recommend them to your practice by some proper motives.

First, Let us consider the fear of God, which sometimes comprehends the whole duty of man; but is more properly taken for a religious reverence of the divine Being and government. There is a fear, or rather dread of God, that arises from unjust apprehensions of him as arbitrary and cruel, which is so far from being a part of true religion, that it destroys the foundation of it. Indeed the notions of the rectitude and majesty of the divine nature are suited to strike terror into the hearts of wicked men; and considering how little influence the arguments of love and kindness have upon the generality of the world, it is necessary to rouse this wakeful passion, that obstinate and hardened sinners may be alarmed to a sense of their duty. Thus when God appeared to the Israelites, under the character of a Lawgiver, upon mount Sinai, in order to procure a regard to his statutes from that stubborn people, he came down “upon a burning mountain, surrounded with blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they who heard entreated they might hear no more; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” Heb. xii. 18, 21. All the representations and appearances of the blessed God under the Old Testament were adapted to beget an holy awe of his glorious greatness; but under the New he is revealed in milder characters, and proposed

proposed more directly as an object of our esteem and affection. The gospel of the grace of God encourages a more ingenuous and child-like disposition than the awful severity of this law; yet still there is the same infinite distance between his Majesty and our meanness as ever, which calls aloud for the most profound reverence. "If I am a Father, where is my honour? and if I am a Master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts?" Mal. i. 6. The eminent excellency of the divine Being, and the honourable relations he stands in to his creatures, must ever be a reason for their fear and respect.

For a clearer explication of this duty therefore, I observe,

That the fear of God consists in a constant habitual sense of the glory of his being and perfections. Low and mean thoughts of the great God can never subsist in a heart that truly fears him: the consideration of the divine Majesty naturally engages us to reverence. His excellency makes us afraid. When Abraham addressed God on behalf of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, how distant and humble was his behaviour! "O let not the Lord be angry, now I, that am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto him." Amidst all the kind familiarity that God indulged him, the good old patriarch observed a becoming awe: and when the prophet Isaiah had seen the glory of the Most High in the temple, and the Seraphims covering their faces, and crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," he discovers the temper of his mind in this moving and beautiful lamentation, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,—and mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts."

Again,

Again, our relations to God, and the concerns we have with him, are another ground of fear, as they bespeak authority and dominion on his part, and profound awe and submission on ours. Do we live and act in the sight of an omnipresent Governor, of perfect justice, holiness, and purity, who beholds the secrets of the heart, and cannot be imposed on, and who will finally reward and punish his creatures according to their behaviour; and can we be void of all concern? Surely every serious person, from a sense of his many imperfections, must say with Job, "When I consider, I am afraid of him." Not afraid as of an arbitrary tyrant, but as of a righteous Governor, and omnipotent Judge, from whose displeasure the disobedient can find no protection or defence. The more we learn and know of God, the greater reason we shall see to reverence him. The saints and angels in heaven, who have larger discoveries of the infinite perfection, unparalleled glory, and sovereign dominion of the blessed God, than the most improved saints on earth, excel proportionably in this becoming temper. "Great and marvellous (say they) are thy works, " Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, " Thou King of saints; who shall not fear thee, " O Lord, and magnify thy name? for thou art " holy." Rev. xv. 3, 4. Now if these holy and perfect spirits above have such a profound reverence for his being and perfections, should not this be a divine excitement to the like sacred passion in our souls? But the fear of God being a disposition of the mind, it may be proper to consider it in the influence it has on our conduct. And thus, as a general principle of religion, it will discover itself both in our doing and submitting to the will of God.

1. In a conscientious and constant regard to the preceptive part of the divine will, Psal. xxxiv. 11, 12. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." Fear, like all other passions, is a motive of action arising from the object we fear; and separate from that consideration, we have very little knowledge what it is. How then can they be said to fear God, who don't obey him? for this reason the fear of God is made the distinguishing character of good men in scripture; and wicked men are said "to have no fear of God before their eyes," because in proportion to the exercise of this divine grace, will be our obedience both as to the universality and strictness of it: good men will not allow of a stated disregard to any part of the divine will, whether moral or positive, nor of a slight and negligent performance of it, but will endeavour to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and more especially at the seasons of divine worship; for "God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all them that are about him," Psal. lxxxix. 7. We shall then consider, that he is in heaven, and we on earth, that we are at the footstool, and he on the throne, not merely a throne of grace, but of justice and government; and therefore "in his fear we shall worship towards his holy temple," Psal. v. 7. And as this fear of God will secure a proper behaviour in his worship, so it will engage us to a constant ready performance of it. The inclination and bent of the soul will be to all those exercises of devotion and piety in which we can pay him a visible homage.

mage. We shall love the habitation of his house, and delight in those ordinances wherein he has promised to converse with us. In short, if the fear of God rule in our hearts, it will appear in an upright and inoffensive behaviour towards God, and all our fellow-creatures. But,

2dly, The fear of God will teach us submission to his providential will. For it is equally inconsistent with this temper of mind, to repine at the disposals of Providence, as to dispute any of his commands, because in both we oppose the divine will, and fly in the face of the great Governor of the world. But can this be the disposition of any who fear God? Or will not such be disposed rather to argue thus?

“Who is it that ordaineth my lot? Is it not the
“omnipotent Sovereign of the universe, whose
“counsel must stand, and who will do all his pleasure? And who art thou, O my soul, then, that
“repliest against God! Wilt thou venture to contend with him, and dispute his right? Shall feeble
“dust and ashes dare to oppose the Almighty,
“who does whatsoever he pleases in the armies of
“heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth,
“and whose hand none can stay, nor may any say
“to him, What doest thou? Reflect, then, on thy
“weakness, and know that he is God.”

These are the genuine effects of a godly fear; by which, it is evident, that a passion which frequently tends to debase the human nature, and unfit it for great and generous actions, may, by the influence of divine grace, be a means of enobling the mind, and rendering it greatly serviceable to the Christian in his most important concerns. I proceed,

Secondly, To explain the other duty recommended in our text, viz. *trusting in God*, which implies a dependance upon him for constant protection, assistance, and relief, and a believing expectation that we

shall not be disappointed. All creatures, however noble, are in their own natures dependent; but man being also in a state of trial, and encompassed with many and powerful enemies, has less reason to rely upon himself, or upon the assistance of any other creature, without a superior dependence upon an almighty and all-sufficient Protector.

In order, therefore, to represent this duty more distinctly, it may be proper to observe,

1. That a sinful creature cannot securely trust in God, without respect to a Mediator. If any of the divine attributes encourage his trust, it must be mercy. But the authority of God having been affronted by the violation of his laws, the honour of his justice stands engaged to vindicate it before the other takes place; for one divine perfection shall not be allowed to triumph upon the ruins of another. The benignity of the divine nature must be dispensed in a way suitable to his other perfections; the devils and damned spirits have therefore no hopes of deliverance from that horrible pit into which they are fallen, because they have no sacrifice or atonement for sin; but God of his infinite goodness has appointed his Son Jesus to be a Mediator between himself and us, who having made peace by the blood of his cross, has opened a door for the display of the riches of his mercy to wretches, who had nothing to expect but the fury of his vengeance.

2^{dly}, Our trust in God must be well regulated. We may not trust him for things unlawful or unnecessary. It would be the highest affront, and discover great ignorance or depravity of mind, to ask a divine blessing upon our endeavours to obtain any thing that is inconsistent with his honour; for this would be to make him partaker of our sins, and to suppose him altogether such an one as ourselves. Nor may we trust in God for things that are not necessary to our happiness, but with humble

ble resignation to the divine wisdom; who knows best whether they will answer the purposes of his own glory, and our comfort. In order therefore, to regulate our practice of this duty, let us consider whether what we trust in God for, be within the compass of any promise; and whether the promise be conditional or absolute; if conditional, as is the case of all temporal blessings, our trust should be with reserve and submission to the will of God; but if absolute, we may then be secure of the performance, though there be never so many obstacles in the way; "for faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it." God will be found true, though all men should be liars; he can neither deceive, nor be deceived; the only difficulty is, whether the promise belongs to us, and we are upon good grounds entitled to the blessing. If we have this assurance, we know that "he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. And when we find any misgivings of mind, we should challenge ourselves in the language of holy David, Psal. xlii. 11. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted with in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

3dly, God is to be trusted in the way of our duty. We are not to stand still, and expect God should work miracles for our relief, or countenance us when we are evidently abusing our reasonable natures. He requires us to do our part, as well as to trust him that he will do his. When Moses commanded the children of Israel to stand still, and see the salvation of God; "The Lord said to Moses, Why criest thou to me, speak to the people, that they go forward," Exod. xiv. 13, 14. It is in the use of means that God affords his blessing, and it is the most arrogant presumption

presumption to expect it any other way. We have no reason to expect God will do our part and his own too. We are therefore to use the same prudence in the management of our affairs, as if there were no providence to direct; the afflicted should make use of all proper means for relief, the poor should work for their daily bread, and every man should be diligent in his calling wherein Providence has fixed him. But above all, we should be careful that we do not by our rashness and imprudence bring trouble on ourselves, and then expect an immediate interposition of Providence for our deliverance: if we have a call to any hazardous enterprise, we may hope for protection; but if we are out of the way of our duty, and run ourselves into danger, God may justly withdraw his aid, and leave us to the consequences of our own folly.

Under the above-mentioned limitations, they that fear God may securely trust,

1. In his wisdom; for there is an invisible hand of Providence that directs all the concerns of human life: when, therefore, our affairs are entangled, and our way hedged up with thorns, we may with humble confidence ask the all-wise God to shew us our duty, or to open a way for our deliverance: "David waited patiently for the Lord, and God inclined to him, and heard his cry; he brought him up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings." Psal. xl. 1, 2. Nor was this the experience of David only, but of great numbers that lived before him: "Our fathers trusted in God, and he delivered them; they cried unto him, and were delivered; they trusted in him, and were not confounded." Psal. xxii. 4, 5. And may I not appeal to the Christians of this age, whether an all-wise God has not frequently brought them out

out of their troubles by a way that they knew not, and led them in paths that they did not know, and made darkness light before them, and crooked things straight?

2. They that fear God may trust in his almighty power; that perfection of God which strikes terror into the hearts of wicked men, is the Christian's sanctuary and refuge in times of trouble; for he has promised to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright towards him. When the patriarch Abraham left his country and his father's house, at the command of God, it was by faith in this promise, "I am God all-sufficient;" and that which encouraged him afterwards to offer up his son Isaac for a sacrifice, was his belief, and trust, that God was able to raise him from the dead. It was by faith in the almighty power of God, that the Old Testament heroes went through cruel trials of mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment; and have not we who live in these last ages of the world the same God to trust in, and greater promises to rely upon? Is his hand shortened that it cannot save, or his ear heavy that it cannot hear? He that could bring water out of a rock, and feed his prophet by a raven in the wilderness, can certainly make a hedge about you, and about your house, and about all that you have on every side.

3. They who fear God may safely trust in his goodness. The goodness of God, is the glory of the divine nature, and that perfection which he delighteth to magnify above all his name. This appears in the common course of Providence, wherein he expresses a regard for the welfare of all his creatures, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness; but is more illustrious in his conduct towards those who
fear

fear him; these are the objects of his special favour, he delights in them, and is always ready to hear their prayers : and tho' he has not exempted them from the common afflictions of life, he has promised to moderate and sanctify them ; nay, he has made it an article of his everlasting covenant, that
 “ he will never turn away from doing them good,
 “ but will put his fear into their hearts, that they
 “ shall not depart from him.” Jer. xxxii. 40.

And if the loving-kindness of God to them that fear him is so remarkable in the present life, O how great must that goodness be that he has laid up for them in the future world ! how surpassing all imagination ! when every desire of the soul shall be satisfied, and filled with all the fulness of God ; when songs and everlasting joys shall be on our heads, and we shall drink of rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God for evermore : all which happiness is enrolled in the covenant, and laid up in the promise : our blessed Saviour is now preparing these mansions for his people, and has assured them, that in due time they shall be their everlasting habitations. What firm foundations are these for the Christian's faith and trust in God !

We proceed, in the second place, to recommend the practice of these duties by the following motives.

1. By this means, we shall secure to ourselves, the divine presence in all conditions of life : when we pass through the waters, God will be with us, and through the rivers they shall not overflow us. Neither the darkest dungeon, nor the strongest inclosure, nor the most barren desert, can interrupt the Christian's communion with heaven. Every earthly comfort may fail, but springs of divine consolation will never be wanting as long as his hope in God remains unshaken. When the disciples deserted their blessed Master the night before his sufferings,

ings, he tells them, "He was not alone, because the Father was with him," John xvi. 32. And though all the apostle's friends forsook him when he was to answer for his life before Cæsar, he adds, "Nevertheless, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me," 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.

2. This will support and compose our spirits under affliction; for as men, we are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards, and as Christians we must expect to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily: this has been the experience of good men in every age; and what has supported and carried them through it, but trust in God? When David threatened to plunder Nabal's house, his heart died within him like a stone; nor could king Ahab survive the disappointment of Naboth's vineyard; but they "who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength, and mount upwards as on the wings of eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint." This will keep afflictions from the heart: a ship at sea will weather the most violent storm, while the waves beat only on the outside; but if the rolling billows break into the hold, it will sink like lead into the mighty waters: the spirit of a man may sustain a great many infirmities and pains of body; but if trouble breaks into the soul, it will quickly be covered with confusion and despair: it was therefore a noble resolution of holy Job, when deprived of all the enjoyments of life, and stript naked to his very skin, "though he slay me, (says he) yet will I trust in him."

3. To fear God and trust in him, is the way to have our afflictions sanctified. Tribulation will then work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope that maketh not ashamed. Adverse providences are apt to stir up corruptions, and produce complaints in the hearts of the best men, but

if they trust in God through Christ in the way of their duty, they will have a quite contrary effect. A Christian never brings so much glory to God, nor discovers so much of the life and power of religion, as when he lives by faith in the day of adversity, speaking well of God, and of all his dispensations. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation after this manner, for when he is tried he shall come forth as gold, (that is) more purified and refined, a greater ornament to religion, and a bright example of the power of religion to an unbelieving world.

4. The practice of these duties will support and comfort us in a dying hour; Christians as well as others may divert their troubles while they are in health, by the entertainments of sense; and if one refuge fails, they may have recourse to another, till the loss is repaired, or the mind made easy; but when they come to die, every refuge drawn from the present life will fail: natural courage, with all the aids of philosophy and reason, is but a feeble relief against the solemn approaches of the king of terrors; but if we have feared and served God in our generation, though under manifold infirmities, we may take refuge in him, and cheerfully commend our spirits into his hands. God will then be the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever. This was king David's cordial on his death-bed, and some of the last words he spoke, "Although my house be
" not so with God, yet he has made with me an
" everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and
" sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

5. By fearing God and trusting in his goodness through Jesus Christ, we shall secure to ourselves an undoubted title to eternal life. Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with them. It is well with them

them in the present life, but it shall be much better with them hereafter, for the day of a good man's death is better than the day of his birth: to be born into this world is to enter upon a life of labour and sorrow; but to die in the favour of God is to enter into a state of everlasting rest and peace, where we shall have a comprehensive view of all that goodness that God has laid up for them that fear him, and that have trusted in him before the sons of men.

A few remarks shall conclude the present discourse.

1. We may learn from hence the excellency of the Christian institution, which has revealed the blessed God as the object of our trust and reliance through a Mediator: a discovery beyond the reach of the wisest philosophers of ancient time: they were apprehensive that God was angry with them, but knew not how to make their peace; and therefore were afraid to fly to him as a sanctuary in distress. When Cato, one of the greatest moralists of ancient Rome, had lived to see the liberties of his country destroyed by Cæsar, and himself ready to be taken captive, he laid violent hands on himself: but the gospel teaches us a nobler behaviour, even to suffer affliction with patience and constancy, committing our own, and the concerns of the whole world, to the wisdom and goodness of the great Governor of all things.

2. How miserable must they be under affliction, or the near approaches of death, that have had no fear of God before their eyes. God is angry with the wicked every day: when they spread forth their hands, he will hide his eyes, and when they make many prayers he will not hear; nay, he hath threatened to laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes. Wild young men may now cheer themselves in the days of their youth, and walk in

the ways of their own heart, but the time is coming " When the Son of Man shall be revealed " from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming " fire, taking vengeance on them that know not " God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus " Christ."

3. Let us beware of trusting too much to the creature. We are not forbid to call in the advice of friends in trouble, but we are not to advance them into the place of the Almighty, by making them the primary object of our dependance; this is undervaluing the providence of God, and unbecoming our relation to him. Our fellow-creatures may deceive, or it may not be in their power to relieve us: " Trust not therefore in princes (says " the prophet) put no confidence in a guide; cease " ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for " wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isaiah ii. 22. Christians have a nobler object of their trust, even the divine goodness and mercy. This is their sure and stedfast anchor, and which entereth into that within the veil.

4. Let me therefore in the last place recommend to your practice the duties of fearing God, and trusting in his goodness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it is the best and most rational way of living; should we not fear and reverence the God that made us, that preserves us, and provides all things for us? Is he a wise, an almighty, and an infinitely good God, and shall we not stand in awe of him? do we fear and reverence our earthly parents and governors, and shall we not fear and reverence the great Governor of the world, who is able not only to kill the body, but to destroy both body and soul in hell? " O that there were " such a heart in every one of you, that you " would fear God and keep all his commandments " always,

“ always, that it might be well with you and with
“ your children for ever !” Deut. v. 29.

And if the fear of God rules in your hearts, you may safely trust him with all your concerns ; for there shall be no real want to them that fear him ; the young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall want no good thing ; the Psalmist resolved not to trust in his bow, nor his sword, but to cast all his care upon God. “ Behold,
“ God is my salvation, (says he), I will trust, and
“ not be afraid ; the Lord Jehovah is my strength
“ and my song, he also is become my salvation.” Let nothing drive us from this anchor, neither the frowns of Providence, nor the temptations of Satan, nor our own unbelieving hearts ; but let all who fear God, of high and low degree, attend to the exhortations of the Psalmist, in their greatest distresses, Psal. cxv. 9, 10. “ O Israel ! trust thou in the
“ Lord ; he is their help and their shield. O house
“ of Aaron ! trust in the Lord ; he is their help
“ and their shield ; and all ye that fear the Lord,
“ trust in the Lord ; for he is your help and your
“ shield.”

SERMON XXXIII.

The Love of God, and universal Obedience.

I JOHN V. 3.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.

THE love of God and obedience to his commands, which are to be the subjects of the present discourse, stand in the closest connection with each other, like a cause and its effect, or like a principle and its genuine product ; and they so intermingle together, that neither of them can well subsist apart from the other. Love to God can never act like itself, or be proved to be sincere, unless it produces obedience ; and obedience can never be hearty and acceptable to God, unless it be principled with love : hence the apostle says in our text, “ This is the love of God,” *i. e.* This is the test, proof, or evidence of our love to God, or this is its native tendency and effect, “ that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.”

In

In speaking to these words, it may be proper as God shall assist us, to consider,

- I. The nature of true love to God.
- II. The influence it has unto our obedience, or unto our keeping his commandments.

I. We are to consider the nature of true love to God.

The love our text speaks of, is a Christian grace, it has the Spirit of God for its author, and springs from faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: the apostle leads our thoughts this way in our context, where he says, "Love is of God, and every one that loves is born of God," chap. iv. 7. And immediately after our text, "Whoever is born of God overcomes this world," ver. 4, 5. *i. e.* his heart and affections are weaned from it, they are disentangled from its snares, and fortified against its temptations; and they soar above the objects of flesh and sense, that they may run out with holy freedom, fervour, and delight toward God, and may all unite in him: and the concern, that faith has herein, is expressed in the following words, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" This faith works by love; it realizes, recommends, and appropriates its glorious object, and so kindles a sacred flame in our bosoms towards it.

The nature of this love, as it has God for its object, may be most familiarly known by its peculiar acts, properties, and effects. Let us therefore take some brief hints of each of these, to assist our thoughts about it. We will begin with

- I. The peculiar acts of true love to God.

And

And some of the chief of these lie in the following instances :

(1.) It has a high approbation and esteem of God.

It thinks of him as the most excellent and amiable Being, as infinitely great and good, and glorious in himself, and in all his counsels; ways, and works; it beholds and admires all that it knows concerning him, and adores his transcendent perfections, as every way worthy of a God, and as exalted above all blessing and praise: it surveys with high approbation and applause the rich and various manifestations he has made of his name in the works of creation and providence, and most of all, in the works of redemption and grace; in the person and mediation of Christ, and in the gospel-method of salvation alone by him. God is hereby endeared to the soul; it prizes him above all things else, and rates its happiness by an interest in his favour and love; its inmost sentiments are, that the perfection of beauty shines in him; that he is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;" Isaiah xxviii. 29. and that "in his favour is life," Isaiah xxx. 5. "And his loving kindness is better than life," lxiii. 3. And the more it thinks of him, the more it is apt to cry out with holy wonder, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens? and what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Psal. viii. 1. 4.

(2.) It has a most benevolent disposition towards God.

It thinks well of God, abhors every unworthy jealousy of him, would always place the utmost confidence in him, and put the best construction on all that he does: though it can add nothing to him, yet it finds a pleasure in the thought, that God is
what

what he is, so infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and it fain would have him every where glorified in the world.

His honour lies very near the heart of one that truly loves him, it reckons his cause its own, and cannot but wish prosperity to it; it is zealous for his glory, it rejoices to see him exalted by any means or by any hand whatsoever, and it is earnestly concerned to be itself a tributary to his praise. How remarkably did the apostle's love to Christ work this way, when, whatever were the designs of them that preached him, he could say, "What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice:" Phil. i. 15,—21. And as to himself, nothing gave him a greater satisfaction, than to think, that "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death, and that to live to him was Christ."

On the other hand, the soul that loves God grieves to hear his name blasphemed in the mouths of his enemies, to see it disgraced in the lives of his professed friends, and to find how much itself is wanting to his praise. David says of God's enemies, who "speak against him wickedly, and take his name in vain, Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee; and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" Psal. cxxxix. 20, 21. The apostle speaking of some scandalous professors of Christ says, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ," Phil. iii. 18. And Job, reflecting on his own dishonourable treatment of God, and his providence, was struck with holy confusion and shame, saying, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will

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“ lay mine hand upon my mouth. I abhor my-
 “ self, and repent in dust and ashes,” Job xl. 4.
 and xlii. 6.

(3.) Its earnest desire is after God.

It often thinks of him, and cannot tell how to live a stranger to him ; where the treasure is, there the heart will be also : While many are saying, “ Who will shew us any good,” the soul that loves God will say, “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy
 “ countenance upon me : whom have I in heaven
 “ but thee? and there is none upon earth that I
 “ desire besides thee,” Psal. iv. 6. and lxxiii. 25. Let me but have God for my God and portion, and I have enough, I need no more ; the whole creation is nothing to me without him, but I should think him every thing, even in the want of all things else. Here is a soul that follows hard after the Lord, and cries out, “ O when wilt thou come
 “ unto me.” Psal. lxiii. 6. and ci. 2. Its “ desire
 “ is to his name, and the remembrance of him,” Isaiah xxvi. 8. It “ intreats his favour with the
 “ whole heart,” Psal. cxix. 58. and says with Job,
 “ O that I knew where I might find him ! that I
 “ might come even to his seat,” Job xxiii. 3. It thirsts for God, the living God ; it longs, it pants, it breathes, and groans, and even faints for him, for a sure interest in him, for some discoveries of his love, and holy communion with him, for likeness to him, and for an enjoyment of him.

(4.) Its complacency and delight is in God.

Its meditation of him is sweet ; it thinks over his glory with delight, it rejoices in the thoughts of his love, and takes pleasure in its converse with him ; it loves his company, and is always most pleased when it gets nearest to him ; it loves to speak to him, and to hear from him, to present itself before him, and to see his smiling face, to tell him how it
 loves

loves him, and to receive the tokens of his love. And when the soul that loves God can claim him, and commune with him, as its own God, Father, and Friend, how does this heighten its delight in him? It can then "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of his glory," Rom. v. 2. 11. It can go to God as its exceeding joy, and find enough in him to please and satisfy it. Though all the springs of creature-comforts should fail, yet, says the Church, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 18. This is love in its most exalted forms, it is love, as it were, at rest in the presence and possession of its beloved object; this is a dawn of heaven, and the beginning of eternal joys. Once more,

(5.) It is pleased or displeased with itself, according as it is conscious to its own aboundings or defects.

There is a joy in love, as well as in faith; and where they meet in their exercise, it is "joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. The soul that loves God, feels itself to be as it should be, and as it would be; and the more the sacred passion glows and flames within, the more it approves of it, and is pleased with it: but when it observes the coolness and defects that attend it, how little it loves God, compared with what it ought and would, it is highly displeased and ashamed at it, and cannot tell how to forgive itself for it; it feels itself to be wrong, and mourns over it. It is heartily grieved at the folly and perverseness, the treachery and ingratitude that go into the languors of its love, and fain would have all its powers of loving engaged to, and united in God. This brings us to consider,

2. The properties of true love to God.

And we shall take notice only of the three or four following.

(1.) It is a judicious love.

The apostle points out this property to us in his excellent prayer for the Philippians, that "their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that they might approve the things that are excellent," Phil. i. 9, 10. True love to God is not a blind enthusiastic passion, or a foolish fondness for one knows not what: but it follows, and is governed by the most deliberate judgment and choice, and is undoubtedly the most free and manly, wise and rational affection, that human nature is capable of. It sees the beauties that attract it, it feels their power, and cannot but willingly yield itself their captive; and the more it knows and enjoys of God, the better it loves him, and is satisfied that he is worthy of all its love: the clearest sense of duty and interest, of gratitude and honour, assure the soul that it ought to love him, and that it is most what it should be, when it loves him best.

(2.) It is an extensive love.

It spreads through all the faculties of the soul; the understanding, will, and affections are all freely, heartily, and sincerely, and fain would be perfectly engaged in it, answerable to that demand, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37. And it extends to every thing that is in God, and that peculiarly relates to him, as far as we are acquainted with it. It loves all the perfections of the divine nature, and all the adorable persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, together with the various displays by which they are glorified. It loves God's word and ordinances,

nances, "O how love I thy law, (says David) it is
 "my meditation all the day! How sweet are thy
 "words to my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to
 "my mouth! And I have loved the habitation of
 "thy house, the place where thine honour dwells."
 Psal. cxix. 97, 103. and xxvi. 8.

It loves the sacred times appointed for religious
 worship, it counts the Sabbath a delight, the holy
 of the Lord and honourable; and it is apt to a-
 dopt the Psalmist's language, "This is the day
 "that the Lord has made, we will be glad and re-
 "joice therein." It loves his interest and king-
 dom in the world, and has "no greater joy than
 "to see his people walking in the truth," 3 John
 ver. 4. And it loves all the children of God, all that
 are born of him, and bear his image, however they
 may be distinguished among men; for "every
 "one that loves him that begat, loves him also
 "that is begotten of him," 1 John v. 1.

(3.) It is a supreme love.

Some degrees of love are allowable, and are due
 to our fellow-creatures, to our country and all hu-
 man nature, to our families, friends, and neigh-
 bours, and to our very enemies; but these must
 be variously proportioned to the different circum-
 stances of things, and all must be subordinate, and
 subservient to the love of God. The chief ardour
 of our affections must aspire to him, the throne must
 be reserved for him, he must sit uppermost and have
 no rival in our hearts, every thing else must give
 way to him, nothing must come in the least com-
 petition with him. Not to love him supremely is,
 in his account, not to love him sincerely: For
 "he that loveth father or mother, son or daughter
 "more than me, (says the Lord) is not worthy of
 "me," Matt. x. 37. And "he that hateth not
 "these, yea, and his own life also," *i. e.* so as to
 give

give them up for Christ, if he must either part with him or them, "cannot be his disciple," Luke xiv. 26. or one that truly loves him.

(4.) It is an abiding love.

It is not a sudden fit or start of the passions; but it is wrought and maintained in the hearts of true believers by the Spirit of God, as a fixed principle and habitual bias, which often shews itself in various acts and exercises, and, upon every serious reflection, gives God the preference to all things else. Though there may be many interruptions and abatements in the sensible working of our affections toward him, yet the settled judgment of the soul concerning him is, that he is altogether lovely; and its resolution is to put nothing into competition with him.

In this respect, it loves him at all times, in prosperity and adversity, when he smiles, and when he frowns, and nothing can make it do otherwise. "It cleaves with full purpose of heart to the Lord," it "walks and dwells in love," and is so rooted and grounded in it, that nothing can ever destroy it; "many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it." This leads us to,

3. The effects of this love.

And here, would our time allow, we should take a view of these, as they might be exemplified in a holy imitation of God, and devotedness to him, in self-denial, patience, and resignation to his will, in the government of all our passions, appetites, and behaviour, in a departure from every thing that offends him, and in laborious endeavours by his grace, to approve ourselves to him, and glorify his name in all that we do: true love to God will have a happy influence unto these, and such like effects, as these. In a word, it will engage us in a course of universal duty and obedience, according to the will of

of God, as may appear in the other principal branch of our discourse, to which we now proceed ; and that is to consider,

II. “ The influence that true love to God has “ unto our obedience,” or “ unto our keeping his “ commandments.”

Concerning this, our text may suggest the four following things.

1. Love to God enters into the very nature of all true and acceptable obedience.

“ This is the love of God, that we keep his “ commandments.” Love itself is an act of obedience to the first and great commandment of the law, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all “ thine heart,” Matt. xxii. 37, 38. And no obedience to any other command can ever be sincerely chosen and practised, much less shall we ever yield an unfeigned impartial obedience to all God’s commands, unless we heartily love him : hope and fear, and other selfish principles, may put us upon some instances of obedience ; but if we don’t love God, we shall be partial and irregular in it all ; we shall do no more than we think will just serve our own turn ; we shall be apt to shift off every duty, that we imagine may be omitted, consistent with our own safety, and to perform only such as are most easily complied with ; like paying mint, anise, and cummin, and that as a sort of atonement for neglecting the rest ; and we shall rather aim at serving ourselves, than at yielding obedience unto God in keeping his commands.

But all this is so very mercenary and mean-spirited, that it is not worthy of the name of obedience to God ; it is not evangelical obedience, nor can it be acceptable to that God, who knows our hearts, and sees through all the springs of our behaviour

haviour towards him. This is the obedience of a slave, and not of a son; of an enemy, and not of a friend; it is such an obedience, as no superior among men would value or accept from an inferior, if he knew it, and could do without it; much less can it be of any account with the great, all-knowing and self-sufficient God, who judges of things by their principles, and demands the willing and chosen obedience of our hearts. When he made a promise to Israel, saying, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx. 6, 8. it is immediately added, "And thou shalt return, and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments." His engaging our hearts to love him, disposes and determines them to an unreserved obedience: "Then are we his friends, if we do whatsoever he commands us," John xv. 14. "then shall we not be ashamed, when we have a respect to all his commands," Psal. cxix. 6. Hence,

2. Love to God inclines, and even constrains us to keep all his commands.

It is a powerful principle of universal obedience to his precepts; it has no exceptions to any of them, but desires, as far as possible, to observe them all, because they are his, and to be unreservedly devoted to his fear. It may be said of our love to Christ, as well as of his love to us, that it "constrains us to live, not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. The sense of his love to us inflames ours to him, and binds his constraining obligations on our hearts. "If ye love me," says our Lord, "keep my commandments, and he that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loveth me: " If

“ If any man love me, he will keep my words ; but
 “ he that loveth me not, keeps not my sayings,”
 John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24.

Love to God will incline the heart to observe his commands in all the duties of the first and second table, in all moral precepts and positive institutions, in every thing without exception, that relates to God, to others, and ourselves ; and if our love were perfect, our obedience would be so too, as it is in those whose love is perfect in heaven : hence love is said to be the fulfilling of the law, and, in proportion to its prevalence and fervour, it will engage us to pursue the most sincere, entire, and unlimited obedience to the whole law ; it will incline us to depart from all iniquity, to fill up the duties of all the relations in which we stand, and to do every thing that we apprehend may be well-pleasing in God’s sight through Jesus Christ : hence were those holy breathings and resolutions of David’s soul, “ O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ! Incline mine heart to thy testimonies. I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments,” Psal. cxix. 5, 36, 106. Hence,

3. Love to God gives us a delight in keeping his commands.

We keep them, and they are not grievous. They are suited to the holy nature of a new-born soul, whose prime affection is love to God ; this takes off distastes, and makes all his precepts agreeable to us ; it makes them our choice and our pleasure ; it sweetens our obedience, and makes us think nothing a trouble or a burden that God calls us to, and nothing too great to do or suffer for him, whereby we may please and honour him, and shew our gratitude, love, and duty to him. Jacob served seven years for Ràchael, and they seemed to him but a

few days, for the love he had for her, Gen. xxix. 20. We all know something of the pleasure of serving and obeying a superior and a friend, whom we entirely love; and if we heartily love God, obedience will be our greatest pleasure; we shall think his yoke easy, and his burden light, and the most difficult service will sit easy upon our minds; we shall delight to do his will, and never be so much pleased, as when we most please him; all his ways will be ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace," Prov. iii. 17. In what moving strains does the royal Psalmist often speak of his choosing the way of God's statutes, of his delighting, and delighting greatly in them, of their being the rejoicing of his heart, and that in keeping them there is great reward, with a beautiful variety of other expressions, to set out the high satisfactions he found in God's way and work, and the cheerfulness of his obedience to his will! Hence,

4. Love to God will make us persevere in keeping his commands.

As it is an abiding principle in the heart of every true believer, it is never weary of serving God. With what fidelity, zeal, and constancy, did Jonathan keep his covenant with David? and how unweariedly did he contrive, and labour, and run all hazards to save him, because he loved him as his own soul? And when love to God is the principle of our obedience, it makes us resolute and steady in it, and finds a reason within itself to engage us in his service all our days: the language of such a soul is like that of the servant under the law, who, instead of seeking a discharge in the year of release, plainly said, "I love my master, I will not go out free," and thereupon had his ear bored thro' with an awl to the door-post, in token that "he would serve him for ever," Exod. xxi. 5, 6.

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The true lover of God consents and chuses to serve him at all times, and for ever; he would not by any means be dismissed, if he might, but willingly bind himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be broken. Love makes God's will our law, and reigns, like a sovereign, over all the other passions of the soul, to bring them into a concurring subjection to him; it invigorates us in every duty, and inspires us with a holy bravery in our devotedness to him; it is strong as death, and will yield to no difficulties, but hold on and hold out to the end. "I will run the way of thy commandments," says David, "when thou shalt enlarge my heart, and I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always unto the end." A few practical reflections shall close this discourse.

USE.

1. Let this put us upon serious enquiry whether the love of God dwells in us.

It is surely of the highest importance that it should do so; for all our religion and happiness depends upon it: "If any man love God, the same is known, (or approved) of him," 1 Cor. iii. 8. And "he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," says our Lord, "he it is that loveth me;" "and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John xiv. 21.

Do we then feel the love of God glowing and abiding in us, and does it influence us to all holy obedience? Are we grieved at heart, that we love him no more, and serve him no better, and that in many things we so often offend him? And can we taste the pleasure of loving him, and of doing the things that please him? We may then humbly make the appeal which Peter made to our Saviour, "Lord,

“thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

2. Let the sinner against God behold how odious and unworthy the principle is that refuses to obey him.

Thou canst not find in thy heart to love God; but, in the inmost temper of thy soul, art an enemy to him, to his justice, holiness, power, and truth; to his sovereignty, law, and government; and therefore it is, that thou wilt not obey and serve him. Ask thyself, and thou mayst find that this is truly the case with thee. But can any thing be more monstrously vile and shocking than this? What! not love the infinitely blessed and glorious God, the mirror of all perfection, who is so transcendently lovely in himself, and endearing in the riches of his mercy and grace! What! be averse in the temper of thy heart, to the author of thy being, the fountain of all thy enjoyments and hopes, the God who bears so much with thee, and is so ready to forgive, who never did thee any wrong, but daily loads thee with his benefits, and makes the freest overtures of his boundless love in Christ for thy eternal happiness! And what! not serve him because thou canst not affect him, nor care to have any dealings with him! O surprising! How monstrously absurd and abominable is all this, how irrational and provoking is the frame of thy heart, how hideous and inexcusable thy guilt, and what vengeance can be too heavy to repay it!

3. Let us prize the gospel of the grace of God, and seek help from thence to engage our love and obedience.

These are duties commanded in the law; but effectual assistance to fallen creatures for performing them, is only to be found in the gospel: here the amiable glories of God's love in Christ are displayed in radiant beauties, to enflame our love and attract our souls to him; and here the spirit of light and

and grace breathes upon us to recommend and enforce them, and to melt us into love to him, because he first loved us.

Think, O believer, on the tender and self-moving love of God, that looked upon thee in thy low estate, and gave his only-begotten Son to be thy Saviour; think on the dying love of a dear Redeemer, who travelled through sweat and blood, agonies and death, to deliver thee from sin and wrath, and raise thee up to heavenly joys; think in how clear and affecting a manner all this is revealed and brought near to thee in the gospel, and how freely the spirit of the new covenant works, in making it effectual to thy salvation; think that God's design in all his gracious counsels and performances for thee, was, that thou mightest be holy and without blame before him in love: and let such considerations as these enhance thy value of that gospel, which reveals all this to thee; let them be improved into so many arguments to engage thy sincerest, warmest love, and universal obedience to God; and let thy soul be looking upwards, and earnestly praying for the blessed Spirit to set them all home upon thee, that thou mayest daily feel him drawing thee with these cords of a man, with these bands of love.

4. Let us look and long for the heavenly state, where all our love and obedience shall be perfected.

O happy state! where perfect love will cast out fear, and all obedience will be chearful and complete, all performed with unwearied application, with uninterrupted freedom and delight! where we shall never be cool towards our God, and never sin against him more.

How unlike to this, how short of this, are our love and duty now! We feel and mourn their weaknesses and blemishes, their interruptions and decays, and we want to have them perfected: but, alas!

alas! this we rather wish than hope for, rather press after than obtain, in our present state and world, where sin and flesh hang upon us, where Satan has access to us, and where thousands of temptations perpetually offer to our grosser appetites.

But, O my soul, think on yonder spotless realms of light and love on high, where God and our Saviour dwell in all endearing glories, where the spirits of just men are made perfect, where mortality is swallowed up in life, and nothing enters that defiles. Come, please thyself with the delightful prospect of that shining region, whose inhabitants are all harmonious and holy, all lovely and loving one another, and all united in joyful love and homage to their God: let faith and hope ease thy present complaints, and anticipate the better things that will there be seen and enjoyed for ever; and let all thy desires soar aloft to that happy world, where thou shalt know as thou art known, and love as thou art loved; where "that which is perfect shall come," and "that which is in part shall be done away."

S E R.

SERMON XXXIV.

Faith and Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS V. 5, 6.

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith ; for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision ; but Faith which worketh by love,

IN the progress of our discourses, we are now come to speak to the duties which the scripture requires of us, relating to Christ as Mediator. Faith and hope in him may well be placed in the first rank of these, being made in the gospel, the prime and most distinguishing characters of a Christian ; therefore it is proper we should begin this subject with the consideration of them. The apostle declares in the 4th verse, that " Christ is become
 R. " of no effect," or of no use to such as seek to be " justified by the works of the law : " their attempting to obtain a right to eternal life in this way, reflects upon what Christ has done and suffered for that purpose as needless and superfluous. But, says he, in the text, " we thro' the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We true Christians under the influence of the Spirit, ground our hope
 of

of life and blessedness upon the righteousness that Christ has wrought out, which we receive by faith; for nothing is of any avail to interest the children of men in him, but faith which worketh by love. I shall,

I. Consider faith in Christ.

II. Hope in him.

Let us in the first place consider faith in Christ, and I shall endeavour,

1. To explain the nature of it.

2. Evince that it is our duty to believe in Christ.

1. I shall endeavour to explain the nature of faith in Christ.

(1.) This includes in it an assent to the truth of Christ's being appointed of God to be a Mediator betwixt him and the sinful children of men. It is an essential part of faith in Jesus, to believe that he is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, who should raise the tribes of Jacob, restore the preserved of Israel; be a light to the Gentiles, and salvation unto the end of the earth: that he is the Son of God, whom he sent into the world, to save sinners; that he died for sins, and was buried; and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. Our Lord told the Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he, (the promised Messiah that should come,) ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. And those of them who were convinced of his divine mission by his miracles, are frequently said in the writings of the evangelists to believe. Yet it is very evident, from the account which the scripture gives of saving faith in Christ, that the whole of it does not consist in our assenting to the truth of this proposition, That Christ Jesus is the Saviour of guilty men. It further denotes,

(2.) An

(2.) An hearty acceptance of him to be our Saviour, as he is proposed to us in the gospel. The apostle tells us, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," so as to be justified, to be entitled to life, Rom. x. 10. Justifying faith is not seated only in the head, but in the heart. The consent of the will must concur with the assent of the understanding to constitute this. Those who believe to the saving of the soul, do not merely give credit to what the word of God declares concerning Jesus Christ; but they unfeignedly accept of that tender, which is herein made of him to perishing creatures, and take him to be all that unto them which he is appointed to be unto such. There are various expressions in the sacred writings, whereby faith in Christ is signified, which plainly shew this to be contained in it. We find it expressed by coming unto Jesus. John vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." That our Lord by coming to him, did mean believing in him, is plain from what is said in the 40th verse, where he shews, that what he had here promised might be safely depended upon. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Those who believe on the name of Jesus, are said to receive him, John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." This is intended by coming and taking the water of life freely, Rev. xxii. 17. "Let him that is athirst come; who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is a description of true believers in Christ, that they "have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them," Heb. vi. 18.

Now, previous to that act of faith in Christ, which is signified by these and the like expressions of scripture, it is necessary we should have some sense of our undone condition through sin. For as those who are whole in their own opinion will not seek to the physician for relief; no more shall we apply to Christ, and take him to be our Saviour, without a conviction of that lost state to which we have been brought by our apostacy from God. The commandment must be set home upon our consciences, so as to convince us of our being sinful guilty creatures, obnoxious to death, otherwise we will not go to Christ, that we may have life.

Again, there must be an hearty approbation of Christ, as one every way suited to our taste, and of his salvation in the whole extent of it, as well as of the method wherein it is to be obtained, according to the divine appointment, before there can be a sincere acceptance of him, which is signified by coming to him, and receiving of him.

(3.) True and saving faith in Christ imports a dependence upon him. When our Lord cautions his disciples against indulging immoderate sorrow, such as would distress and sink their hearts, he shews them the unreasonableness of this, by putting them in mind of their faith in God. John xiv. 1. "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God." Doubtless, he did not mean hereby, that they believed the being of a God; but that they relied upon him. Surely, then, when he adds in the last clause of the verse, "believe also in me," he must be understood as directing them to put their trust also in himself.

The faith of the Gentiles in Christ is expressed by trusting in him, Rom. xv. 12. "In him shall the Gentiles trust;" that is, in him shall they believe; as appears from the apostle's prayer for the
Romans

Romans, who were Gentiles, in the next verse, "Now the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing." Trusting in Christ, and believing in him, are used by St Paul as expressions of the same import, Ephes. i. 13. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The apostle Paul represents his own faith in Christ, as under the notion of committing a trust unto him, 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." So that to believe in Christ, is to entrust him with our precious and immortal souls, with our eternal concerns; and in order to our thus believing in Christ, we must be made sensible of our own weakness, of our inability to help ourselves. No one that has an opinion of his own sufficiency, will depend upon another. Therefore the persons invited by our Saviour to apply to him for rest, are such as "labour and are heavy laden," such as are ready to sink under the burden of their sins, who feel them to be too heavy for them, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Hence it is that faith is said to exclude boasting, Rom. iii. 27. because it acknowledges our incapacity to save ourselves, by relying entirely upon Christ for salvation. Thus, I have given you a plain, and I think a scriptural account of faith in Jesus Christ.

2. I am to evince, that it is our duty to believe in Jesus Christ.

(1.) The evidences of God's appointment of Jesus to be Mediator betwixt him and men, are

sufficient to convince all attentive and unprejudiced persons, upon whom the light of the gospel shines. The exact accomplishment of the many ancient prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, relating to the Messiah, in our Lord Jesus: the miracles wrought by him in the presence of enemies, as well as friends, who could not deny the reality of them: his resurrection from the dead on the third day, according to his own prediction; which was attested by several witnesses of undoubted credit; many of whom sealed their testimony with their blood: his sending down upon the apostles, after his ascension, the Spirit, as he had promised, by whom they were endued with divers miraculous gifts, and were enabled to perform numberless wonders, far above the power of nature, are such proofs of God's sending Jesus into the world, for the purposes declared by him, that no one can refuse his assent hereto, without very culpable negligence, or the indulgence of unreasonable prejudices: they that will not be satisfied with such light, must love darkness; therefore are they most justly condemned, John iii. 18, 19. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

(2.) As it is a faithful saying, so it is "worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Did God send his only-begotten Son into the world? Did he who was in the bosom of the Father, readily come down to this earth, to take upon him the form of a servant, and to submit to the death of the cross? Did he thus humble himself, that the sinful children of men

men might be delivered from the wrath to come; that they might be saved from their sins, the worst of evils, and be restored to the image, and enjoyment of God the chief good, that they might have life, and have it more abundantly? Surely such a Saviour, such a salvation, is worthy of the readiest and most thankful acceptance. Can he be made light of? can this be neglected without the greatest folly, and the vilest ingratitude? Nothing is more obvious, than that they who despise the most amazing grace, deserve the heaviest vengeance. This being so plain a case, the apostle refers the decision of it to our own consciences, Heb. iii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

(3.) We all need Christ and his salvation, therefore it behoves us greatly to accept of him. All mankind are become guilty before God: "There is none righteous, no not one: they are all gone out of the right way." So that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God," Rom. iii. 10. and following verses. We have been far from continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them: we are therefore obnoxious to its curse. Wretched is the condition to which we are reduced by sin: this has greatly corrupted our nature, and brought us into a state of the basest slavery. We have hereby lost the favour of God; and upon this account we stand exposed to his anger, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Do not we then greatly need a Saviour? "And is there salvation in no other but in Christ Jesus? is there none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?" Acts iv. 12. What can be of greater concern to us, than that we receive him as he is tendered to us in the gospel? Hath God
most

most expressly declared in his word, that "he who hath not the Son hath not life?" 1 John v. 12. Are we herein told that "the wrath of God abideth on him that believeth not the Son?" John iii. 36. that "he shall die in his sins;" a most lamentable case! that he shall perish! Will not the blame of our ruin then lie at our own doors, if we continue faithless, if we will not believe in Christ?

(4.) Christ Jesus is an all-sufficient Saviour, therefore we ought to believe in him, to depend upon him. Those who are at the greatest distance from God, may be brought nigh by him, Eph. ii. 13. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ." There is virtue enough herein to cleanse from all sin: and we have a certain account in the scripture of its being effectual to remove the guilt of very great offenders. The apostle Paul styles himself the *chief of sinners*; and indeed his behaviour was highly provoking. "He was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but he obtained mercy: and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus,"

1 Tim. i. 13, 14. What an horrid description does the apostle give of some of the Corinthians in their unconverted state? The vilest characters belonged to them; but he says, that they were "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God;" 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10,

11. And the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings is not diminished; nor can it ever be exhausted. He will "in no wise cast out any that come unto him," John vi. 37. None that apply to him shall be rejected, how heinous and aggravated soever their iniquities be. What then can be more fit and reasonable, than that perishing creatures,

tures, as we all are in ourselves, should put their trust in such an all-sufficient Saviour?

(5.) We are expressly required in the word of God to believe in Christ Jesus. An heart of unbelief is emphatically stiled an *evil heart*; it rebels against the word of the living God, and departs from him, Heb. iii. 12. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Believing in Christ is spoken of as the principal work, which God enjoins upon us under the gospel, John vi. 28, 29. "They said unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This is represented as the great commandment of God, 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." So that we are under the obligation of a divine command to believe in the Lord Jesus, the violation of which puts the grossest affront upon God. The scripture tells us in express terms, that he who is guilty hereof, "maketh God a liar, because he believeth not the record that he gave of his Son," 1 John v. 10. And shall not such a vile indignity be avenged by him? "Did he who despised Moses law die without mercy? Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy," who casts contempt upon God's own Son? Heb. x. 28, 29. Having shewed that it is our duty to believe in Jesus Christ, give me leave to subjoin a few remarks.

1st *Remark*, Though it be our duty to believe in the Lord Jesus, and this should be pressed upon our consciences, yet we need the aids of divine grace to enable us to discharge this duty; therefore we should ask them of God. "No man (saith
"our

our Saviour,) can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," John vi. 44. Let us then earnestly beg of God, that he would by his Spirit convince us of sin, give us a deep sense of the evil and danger of it; that he would shew us the suitableness of Jesus Christ to our case, and draw us unto him that we may be made his "willing people in the day of his power." True faith is the gift of God, it is of his operation, and we should seek it of him.

2d *Remark*, It is not only the duty of persons, when they are first awakened to a sense of sin, to believe in Jesus Christ; those also who have received him should be daily exercising faith in him. It is not said, He that hath believed on the Son of God is not condemned; but "he that believeth on him," which denotes a continued act, John iii. 18. We remain weak and unworthy, therefore we should be ever depending upon Christ for righteousness and strength. The church is spoken of as "leaning on her Beloved," in her passage thro' the wilderness, Cant. viii. 5. The apostle made constant use of his faith in Christ, as appears from what he says, Gal. ii. 20. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God:" and he represents all true Christians in the text, as "waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith."

3d *Remark*, True faith in Christ is a vital, active principle. Thus it is described in the words which are the subject of the present discourse; "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." If our faith does not engage our affections to God, to Christ, and our fellow-Christians, so as to produce the proper fruits and effects of love to them, it will be no more available to our acceptance

tance with God, than circumcision, or uncircumcision.

The faith of those who are approved of God "purifies their hearts," Acts xv. 9. It is effectual to subdue their lusts, which are contrary to God, and to form them into such a temper as is agreeable to him.

"He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God "overcometh the world," 1 John v. 5. The views which he takes by faith of the excellencies and condescending love of the Son of God, raise such an esteem of him, and excite such love to him, that the world appears mean and contemptible in his sight.

Charity springs from unfeigned faith, 1 Tim. i. 5. The affecting sight of the grace of Christ, which this gives those in whom it is found, disposes them to do good unto all, especially unto such as are of the household of faith. Let us "examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith;" too many are mistaken as to this; it behoves us therefore to be circumspect in an affair of such vast importance; we should carefully enquire, whether our faith be a vital active principle, working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. These are the characters by which saving faith is described in the scripture; and it is of the utmost concern to us, that we do not take up with an empty inefficacious notion instead of this. I proceed,

II. To discourse of hope in Christ. It is our duty to hope in him, and he is stiled the Hope of Christians, 1 Tim. i. 1. because they ground their hope upon him. Here let us,

1. Consider what it is they hope for in Christ Jesus.

2. Enquire into the reasons of their hope in him.

1. Let us consider what it is true Christians hope for in the Lord Jesus. Should I mention all the particulars of their hope in Christ, the time allotted me would not be sufficient for this: I think they may be comprised under the following heads.

(1.) True Christians hope that the Lord Jesus will keep that which they have committed unto him against the great day. Though their souls be of such a value, that the gain of the whole world cannot compensate the loss of them, yet they do not think them too precious to be trusted with Christ; and they hope that he will not suffer them to perish, but preserve them in a saving state amidst all the dangers of the present world, till their state of trial be at an end. It was the expectation of this that encouraged and animated the apostle, to conflict with great difficulties and oppositions in the service of Christ. 2 Tim. i. 12.

For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And he found Christ to be willing, as well as able, not only to keep him from falling, but to make him triumphant in very trying circumstances. Rom. viii. 37.

"In these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." He that was so conscious of his own weakness, as to own he was not "of himself sufficient to think any thing," 2 Cor. iii. 5. yet was so confident as to say, that he "could do all things through Christ which strengthened him," Phil. iv. 13. Real believers may, and do hope, that they shall have such sup-

plies

plies of grace and strength from Christ, as will be sufficient for them, as will enable them to persevere to the end.

(2.) They hope that he will "present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Those who are in Christ Jesus, and consequently exempted from condemnation, walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; yet while they are in the body, they find many sad imperfections cleaving unto them. However they hope, that "when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall then appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. That he will do away every blemish from them, and present them to himself all glorious, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. v. 27. "They look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," they hope that he will then blot out their iniquities, that a sentence of absolution shall be passed upon them in the most public manner by him; that he will justify them before all the world. This grace shall be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ, for which they are required, to hope unto the end, 1 Pet. i. 13. Upon which account his appearing is very justly stiled that blessed hope, Titus iii. 13.

(3.) True Christians hope through the Lord Jesus to be "admitted to dwell for ever with him in his Father's house." This is the hope of righteousness by faith, for which they wait; or the blessedness which they live in expectation of, thro' the righteousness of Christ, tendered in the gospel to them, which they have received by faith. Tho' they are sensible they deserve to die because of their

“ sins; yet they hope that “ grace will reign through
 “ righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ;”
 that he will say unto them in that day, when “ he
 “ shall be glorified in his saints, and admitted in
 “ all them that believe, Come, ye blessed of my
 “ Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you
 “ from the foundation of the world.” However
 unworthy they are in themselves, yet being united
 to Christ by faith, he is their hope of glory.”

2. Let us enquire into the reasons of this their
 hope in Christ Jesus.

(1.) God's appointment of the Lord Jesus to the
 work of Mediation encourages the hope of belie-
 vers in him. To be sure, it belonged of right to
 him, who was offended and dishonoured by our
 sins, to chuse the person that should save us from
 them. If we wanted evidence of Christ's being
 ordained by God, to be the Saviour of sinful men,
 we could not safely rely upon him; but inasmuch
 as this plainly appears, our hope of salvation in
 him is hereby warranted. Hence it is, that the
 scripture mentions so often, his being given and
 sent by God. John iii. 14, 15, 16. “ As Moses
 “ lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so
 “ must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoso-
 “ ever believeth in him, should not perish, but
 “ have eternal life: for God so loved the world,
 “ that he gave his only-begotten Son, that who-
 “ soever believeth in him should not perish, but have
 “ everlasting life.” Gal. iv. 3, 4. “ When the full-
 “ ness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,
 “ made of a woman, made under the law, to re-
 “ deem them that were under the law, that we
 “ might receive the adoption of sons.” Our Lord
 Jesus tells those who came unto him, for their en-
 couragement, to expect from him “ meat which en-
 “ dureth to everlasting life, that God the Father
 “ had

“ had sealed him ;” that is, commissioned him, to bestow it, John vi. 27.

(2.) The dignity of Christ’s person encourages believers to hope in him. We might indeed infer that our Lord Jesus is every way equal to the work of mediation, from his being appointed to it by the Father, who is infinitely wise and good : But we are expressly told in his word, that he hath “ laid help upon one that is mighty,” Psal. lxxxix. 19. “ Behold, saith the Lord God,” Isa. xxviii. 16. “ I lay in Zion for a foundation, a “ stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a “ sure foundation : he that believeth shall not “ make haste, or shall not be confounded,” as it is rendered 1 Pet. ii. 6. The apostle, designing to establish the confidence of the believing Hebrews in Christ Jesus, as having obtained eternal redemption for them by that one sacrifice he made of himself, not only proves that he was called of God to the priestly office, but represents him as a most glorious and excellent person ; as the brightness of the Father’s glory, and express image of his person ; whose offering of himself therefore must have sufficient virtue in it to purge our sins, Heb. i. 3. Is he who is our righteousness, Jehovah ? Jer. xxiii. 6. Surely that hope which is founded upon him cannot be too strong ; nor can it hardly rise too high. Is it not most reasonable, firmly to expect a glorious salvation from that Saviour who is the great God ? Titus ii. 13. “ looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus “ Christ.”

3. The resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ encourage the hope of believers in him. The apostle mentions these together, as contributing very much to their security from condemnation.

tion. Romans viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."

Christians are said to be "begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Life is assured to them by his living: "Because I live," said he to his disciples, John xiv. 19. "ye shall live also." When "he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive," Eph. iv. 8. he had "power given him over all flesh; that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him," John xvii. 2. "and he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. How justly then did the apostle expect with so much assurance salvation by the life of Christ? Rom. v. 10. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

4. The compassion of Christ is a reason of believers hope in him. Though he be a great High Priest, and is passed into the heavens, yet he is not such a one "as cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Which consideration should encourage us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. He is merciful, knows how to pity us under our weaknesses and trials, "for he hath suffered, being tempted," therefore he is able, is disposed and ready "to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18. Christians are directed "to look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude, ver. 21.

5. The

(5.) The promises of God in Christ Jesus greatly support the hope of believers in him; they have a promise of very ancient date to bear up their hope of eternal life, Titus i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, has promised before the world began." It appears from 2 Tim. i. 9. that this "grace was given them in Christ Jesus." Possibly it may respect a promise of the covenant of redemption, made before the world began, between the Father and the Son, wherein it was engaged, that those who should believe in him, shall live for ever; of which covenant God is ever mindful. We find this often promised to believers in Christ, in the word of God. This assures them, that "through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins," Acts x. 43. It saith, that "whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed," his hopes in Christ shall not be disappointed, Rom. x. 11. Everlasting life is so well secured, by the promise of God, who is faithful, to every believer in Christ, that he is spoken of, as if he was already in the possession of it. John iii. 36. "He who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Thus I have set before you the reasons of Christians hope in the Lord Jesus.

REFLECTIONS.

1. *Refl.* We may hence learn, that true Christians should be "ready always to answer every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them." Seeing it is so reasonable, so well grounded, they should never be ashamed of it, nor suffer themselves to be moved from it by the vain cavils of men.

There

There are many bold attempts made in our day to overthrow the faith and hope of Christians. It greatly concerns us to be upon our guard, to take care, that we "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," Col. i. 23. Happy will it be for us, if we "hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. then shall we be "partakers of Christ," ver. 14. We shall be admitted to his enjoyment, which is a great recompence of reward, vastly out-weighing all the reproaches, and difficulties of every kind, to which we may be exposed by our Christian profession. The more closely we examine the grounds of Christians hope in the Lord Jesus, the greater satisfaction we shall find. Let us cleave to him with purpose of heart: where can we meet with such an hope as is to be found in him? "To whom shall we go? He has the words of eternal life."

2. *Ref.* Is our hope in Christ Jesus? Then it should be our great care to glorify his name, and "to adorn his doctrine in all things." And in order hereto, let us live answerable to our hope in him. Do we hope to "see him as he is," and to be "made like unto him?" Then it becomes us to "purify ourselves, as he is pure:" Hereby his religion will be recommended; when those who profess this, shew forth in their lives his virtues, they take the most effectual method to promote the honour of his name. Do we hope for eternal life through Christ Jesus? Let this animate us in his service. The hope of true Christians is a lively hope. They disparage their hope in Christ, when they are listless and languid in the performance of those duties to which he calls.

calls them; when they are easily turned aside from his ways. May it not be reasonably expected, that those who know their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, should be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in his works? It is no wonder then, that the profession of the blessed hope of the gospel should be looked upon as a vain pretence, in those who take little care to secure to themselves the accomplishment of it. What scandal have the professors of Christianity brought upon the name of Jesus, and upon their hope in him, by their attachment to the things of this life! When they shew great fondness for the vanities of time, all that they say of the eternal happiness they look for by Christ Jesus, is accounted as mere empty talk, and it has often been the occasion of raising, in the minds of men, strong prejudices against the gospel itself. Is our hope of heaven built upon Christ Jesus? We are obliged in gratitude to honour him by a suitable behaviour here on earth.

3. *Refl.* It behoves us to be very solicitous, that we do not take up with such an hope as shall make us ashamed. The salvation proposed by Jesus Christ to his disciples is inexpressibly great; and it should be our great concern that our expectations of it be not disappointed. Not every one that says unto Christ, "Lord, Lord," that pretends respect for him, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. vii. 21. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish." We should then look well to ourselves, and take care that we be real Christians, that nothing be lacking in us, which the gospel of Jesus makes necessary to salvation. If, upon due examination, we see reason to conclude that we have good hope through grace; we should be "waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith."

130 *Faith and Hope in our Lord, &c.*

We should keep the blessed objects of it in our view, and live in the joyful expectation of their enjoyment. This will fortify our minds against the temptations of the present state; and make us "willing" and desirous rather to be absent from the body, "that we may be present with the Lord,"

S E R.

SERMON XXXV.

Love and Obedience to Christ, with Zeal
for his Kingdom among Men.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 14, 15.

For the Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

NEVER was any man more remarkably influenced by the love of Christ, throughout his whole life, than the apostle Paul was after his conversion. Before, he had been a bitter enemy to Christ, and a furious persecutor of his friends and people: but behold how great a change divine grace had made! What the sacred story relates of the change of Amnon's love into hatred of his sister, was remarkably to be seen in the change of this apostle's hatred into love of his Saviour, "That the love wherewith he now loved him, was greater than the hatred wherewith he had hated him." Christ was now always in his thoughts, he "desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him cru-

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"cified;

cified; he counted all things but loss for Christ." To him did he now devote his whole life and labours in a constant and unwearied service. Nothing was so dangerous but he was willing to undertake it, nothing was so hard but he was willing to do it for the sake of Christ, to serve his interest, and promote his honour. He was ready to be bound and to die for him. Nay, so vehement was this his sacred love, that it overcame the very love of life, which is natural to every man; he counted not his life dear unto himself, that he might approve himself faithful to Christ in the discharge of his ministry: and he was so far from fearing death, that he desired the happy remove, as soon as ever God pleased, when he should depart from hence and be with Christ. Thus was the apostle's whole life and practice a fair illustration of what he writes in our text, "The love of Christ constraineth us:" And in nothing was he a brighter example of the doctrine which he taught, than in the exercise and fruits of love to Christ.

The love of Christ constraineth us, is a vigorous expression. The Greek word which is here translated constraineth (*συνέχει*) is elsewhere used on the most urgent and pressing occasions: as concerning the vehement desire of Christ to accomplish the salvation of his people by his sufferings, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened (*συνέχεται*) till it be accomplished?" Luke xii. 50. And concerning the apostle Paul's earnest desire of the conversion and salvation of his brethren and kinsmen the Jews: he was pressed (*συνέχεται*) in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ, Acts xviii. 5.

The love of Christ, as mentioned in our text, may be understood either of Christ's love to us, or

of

of our love to him ; but either way the sense will amount to much the same ; for if we understand it of Christ's love to us, it must be supposed to have kindled a reciprocal love in our hearts to him, or otherwise we feel not its constraining power : or if we understand it of our love to Christ, still we must remember, that his love was the cause of ours : we love him because he first loved us. Tho' our love be the more immediate principle, yet his love was the first cause of all the grateful and dutiful returns which a believer makes to Christ. However, we may take in both these senses, by discoursing on the text according to the following method :

First, To give some account of the love of Christ to us, which is the foundation and cause of our love to him.

Secondly, To consider our love to Christ, which is the consequence and fruit of his love to us.

Thirdly, To consider that genuine and powerful effect of this love, which our text speaks of, it will constrain us to live unto him.

First, Let us take some account of Christ's love to us, which is the foundation and cause of our love to him : not indeed the only foundation of it ; for the excellency of his person affords abundant reason why we should love him, abstracted from all consideration of his love and kindness to us. All sorts of perfection, both divine and human, meet in this glorious God-man Christ our Saviour, which render him the worthy object of our highest love. He is in himself altogether lovely. But yet, was there no reason for our loving Christ, than merely his own inherent perfections
and

and excellencies, it may well be doubted whether they would be in fact sufficient to kindle one spark of love in our hearts to him. The devils know who he is, the Holy one of God, and what an excellent and glorious person he is, as well, and probably better than we do; and yet they do not love him at all: and if Christ had loved us no more than he has loved them, most probably we should have loved him no better than they do. 'Tis chiefly Christ's love expressed to us that kindles and influences our love to him: and so the matter is represented in our text, where the immediate cause and attractive of our love, and zeal for Christ, is said to be "his dying for us, and rising again, when we were all dead." We may take notice of these particular expressions and instances of his love, which are hinted in this text.

1. "That Christ died for us:" his dying was the finishing of his sufferings, and sometimes, as here in our text, it is put instead of them all, even all the torments which he suffered in his body, and all the agonies of his soul, when he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted: all this he suffered for us. He died for us, says our text, that is, not only for our benefit, by setting us a fair example of patience under suffering, and as a martyr, to confirm and seal his doctrine with his own blood; but he died for us in our very room and stead; he suffered and died under the imputation of our guilt, and in order to make a proper atonement and satisfaction for our sins to the justice and law of God. "He laid down his life for his friends," John xv. 13. And "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," says St Paul, Rom. v. 6. and that he meant it of his dying in our room and stead, is evident from the words that

that follow, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die: But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Where the apostle speaks of Christ dying for sinners, in the very same sense, as one man may be said to die for another; that is, by suffering death in the other's room and stead, thereby to save the other from dying. Thus Christ our Saviour died for us; thus he has expressed his love to us, and hath given us the strongest proof of it that could be given; for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." It is but peradventure that such love will ever be found in any heart of man to his best and dearest friend; but thus has Christ our Saviour witnessed his love to sinners, he died for us. It follows,

2. That he rose again, which seems to be mentioned as a further proof and instance of his love; and therefore it must imply, that his resurrection was, some way, for us too: It was designed for our advantage. And so we read elsewhere, that "he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. As his suffering and death were for the payment of debt; so his resurrection was in order to our discharge. He rose as much for our sake as his own; And after he had lived and lost one life for us, still he was pleased to devote that new life which he now entered upon to our service and interest. He arose, and went to heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, to be our advocate with the Father, and to prepare a place there for his friends and followers.

3. "It is hinted in our text, what a wretched state and condition Christ found us in, when he thus

“ thus expressed his love to us. It was when we “ were all dead ;” not only judicially dead, as being under a sentence of condemnation ; but spiritually dead too, as being alienated, and estranged from God. It was when his holy image, which was the original glory of our nature, was sullied, and in a manner quite defaced, when we had not one spark of love to God remaining in our hearts ; but on the contrary, our carnal mind was enmity against him. It was when we were sinners, enemies, and ungodly wretches, that Christ commended his love to us by dying for us. He laid down his life, not for the righteous and good, but for wicked and perverse creatures : Not for friends, but for enemies. How surprisingly great, and free, and generous was the love of Christ our Saviour ! Let us consider once more,

4. “ What Christ aimed at in all this, and what “ blessings his love designed us, when he died for “ us. It was that we might live ;” that is, that we might be acquitted from our guilt, and delivered from condemnation, and from the deserved torments of hell for ever ; and that we might be renewed to a spiritual life of holiness, and be raised at last to an immortal life of happiness and glory in heaven. It was that we might live for ever with him in a state and world of compleat and uninterrupted joy and comfort. These are the circumstances of Christ’s love to us, which are hinted in the text. Let us now,

Secondly, Consider “ Our love to Christ, which “ is, or which however always should be, the consequence and fruit of his love to us.” To all those that do believe in him Christ is precious. All them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity, is the apostle’s periphrasis for all true believers

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or Christians, Ephes. vi. 24. Christ will own none for his disciples and friends, who love him not. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Nay, such a love must we have for Christ, if we expect that he should own us and bless us, as comparatively to hate our very dearest earthly relations and friends, according to those words of his, Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And again, Matt. x. 37. "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." It is not only very lawful, but it is a duty for relations and friends to love one another; but Christ must be loved above them all: that is, we must value him at a higher rate; we must prefer his interest to theirs, and to our own comfort and pleasure in them, whenever they come to stand in competition. We must be content rather to be separated from every dear relation and worldly comfort, and to part with our very lives too, than to be separated from Christ, or to do any thing which would redound to his dishonour; as it is said of the martyrs, that "they loved not their lives unto the death," Rev. xii. 11: that is, they loved them not so well, but that they could give them up in Christ's cause. When their love of life stood in competition with their loyalty to their Lord and Saviour, they were willing to part with their lives, rather than part with Christ, or live to his dishonour. Thus must Christ be loved above all by every disciple. But here it may be of some importance to observe, that there are plainly two kinds of love which our

hearts are capable of: which, though they are sometimes mixed and blended, as it were together, yet are they very distinct and different in their own nature; the one is a mere animal passion, the other is a rational love. Of the former kind is the passionate fondness of parents for their own children; the other is such an affectionate esteem as we have for persons of great worth and merit, or to whom we are obliged for some favour and kindness, and whom we therefore love chiefly out of gratitude, or for their worth's sake. Now love to Christ is rather of this latter kind; 'tis not so much a passionate fondness, as a rational love. Do not we easily perceive a wide difference between our fond love for our own children, which we have pretty much in common with the brutes for their young offspring, and the love which a loyal subject bears to his worthy prince, a WILLIAM or a GEORGE, for instance, those glorious deliverers of our nation, or the love which a man, who delights in philosophic science, will have for a Newton or a Boyle, though perhaps he has not seen the faces of either of them? Something of this sort is the believer's love to an unseen Saviour: It takes its rise in the nobler powers of the soul, the reason and understanding, and from thence it proceeds to incline the will to choose Christ, and the heart to delight in him. This distinction may possibly be of use to some pious persons, who are troubled because they cannot bring their hearts to love Christ so affectionately as they love a child, or some other fellow-mortal, when perhaps their trouble is chiefly owing to their mistaking the nature of sacred love. They do not love Christ with so passionate a fondness, and yet they truly esteem him as the chiefest of ten thousands; they would be ready to forego

forego every creature comfort, rather than be separated from Christ, and they would heartily sacrifice every worldly interest to his cause and honour. This certainly shews, that the best and supreme love is fixed on Christ, how strongly soever the animal passions may work towards some lower object. Upon the whole then, true love to Christ chiefly consists in a high esteem and value of him, which will exert itself in frequent admiring thoughts of him, in a desire of his presence, and a delighting in it, so far as we are favoured with it. Thus much concerning the nature of love to Christ. Let us now proceed,

Thirdly, “To consider that genuine and powerful effect of this love to Christ which our text speaks of. It will constrain us to live unto him.” This effect the apostle tells us he felt of it upon himself, and he durst answer for it, that it had the like effect on every true lover of Christ in the world: and therefore he speaks here in the plural number; in the name of all his fellow-disciples, “The love of Christ constraineth US, because WE thus judge, that since he died for us, when we were dead, we should henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto him;” where living unto Christ stands directly opposed to living unto ourselves; and the opposition will easily lead us into the true meaning of this phrase “living unto Christ:” for to live unto ourselves, is plainly to follow our own inclinations, and to seek and aim at our own ease, and pleasure, and profit: so to live unto Christ, is to follow his directions, to make his will our rule, and zealously to aim at, and endeavour to promote his interest and honour. The whole of this duty therefore of living unto Christ may be summed up in these two articles:

First, It implies obedience to his will.

And, *Secondly*, Zeal for his interest and honour.

First, To live unto Christ, is to live in obedience to his commands. It is to make his will the rule that we live by, it is practically to own him for our Sovereign and Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve. Upon this Christ himself has put the proof of our love, and made our obedience the test of it over and over, as John xiv. 15. "If you love me, keep my commandments." And verse 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Again, verse 23. "If a man love me he will keep my words." For love is an active principle, which will make us ready to serve the object of it. Commonly the desire of one that we heartily love carries in it the force and weight of a command. Our love is motive sufficient to do what such a person would have us do. And can a man truly love Christ and not obey his commands? It can never be; obedience is a fruit that naturally and constantly grows upon love. And what sort of an obedience to Christ that will be, to which we are constrained by love, you will easily apprehend; as,

1. That it must be a willing and hearty obedience; not like that of slaves to a tyrant, whom they hate, where the only motive to obey is a fear of punishment. Of this sort is all the obedience which wicked men pay to Christ: they would not have this man to reign over them; and if in some cases they obey his commands, 'tis all a force on their inclination, 'tis only because they dare not do otherwise, for fear of punishment which he has threatened to those that obey not this gospel. But in Christ's account this is no obedience at all.

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All true evangelical obedience flows from love ; and where love is the principle, obedience will be heartily and cheerfully paid : so was David's obedience to the divine law, " I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right ; " and I hate every false way," saith he, Psal. cxix. 128. *q. d.* " My soul approves the way of duty, " therefore do I walk in it, and not merely for the sake of reward. I hate sin, therefore I avoid it all I can ; and not merely because I am afraid of punishment. I would not be excused from my duty if I might ; I would not practise sin, though I might do it with impunity." Such is the obedience which flows from sacred love. The man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, is like the servant under the law, who would not go free if he might, but says, " I love my master, and I will not go free, but will serve him for ever," Exod. xxi. 5, 6. It will follow from hence,

2. That the obedience which flows from love must be sincere, and universal, to all Christ's commandments without any exception. I do not mean, that it will be perfect ; for, alas ! perfection is not the property of any thing in this state and world. " If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," said that warmest lover of Christ, the apostle John, 1 John i. 8. But yet true love will not knowingly allow of any defect in obedience, nor of the least transgression of any command of Christ. Herod heard John Baptist, and did many things. The young man, whose story we read, Matt. xix. said, and probably he believed as, he said, that he had " kept all God's commandments from his youth," verse 20. But when our Saviour discovered to him one defect in his obedience, in that one point he was not willing to amend.

amend. But whosoever truly loves Christ, will stick at no duty, however troublesome or expensive, or distasteful to flesh and blood. "Ye are my friends," said Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." without any exception. Concerning this sort of perfection of our obedience, I understand these words, James ii. 10. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Not that every omission and sin throws a believer out of a just state, and brings him again under guilt and condemnation; for who then could be saved? But whosoever knowingly and willingly allows himself in the transgression of any one divine command, even supposing he obeyed all the other commands of God to perfection, yet this certainly proves him to be a hypocrite in religion; this shews that his obedience does not flow from a right principle, that it is not constrained by love, and therefore that he is yet under guilt, and in a state of condemnation. So vain is it to think that our good deeds will make amends for our bad ones, that one voluntary exception in our duty and obedience to Christ, spoils all that we do in his service. Our obedience to Christ, which flows from love, must and will be sincere and universal. And,

3. It will be like its principle, constant and persevering. We shall not obey him by fits and starts only, as many hypocrites do, who are sometimes frightened into a present reformation, and set about reading and praying, and other neglected duties; but in a little time their devotion cools again, and their goodness becomes like the morning cloud and early dew, which goeth away. But that obedience to Christ which flows from love, is a much more settled and constant thing: it may possibly admit of some breaks and interruptions, but it will never

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be quite left off and laid aside any more. When the heart is once inflamed with a sincere love to Christ, it will be inclined as David's was, to perform his statutes always unto the end. Thus you see, that love to Christ will most certainly constrain us to live in obedience to his commands. Let us go on,

Secondly, To consider the other part of our duty, of living unto Christ, which is as much the natural fruit of love to him as the former; and that is, our being zealous for his interest and honour. Upon this Christ put the proof of Peter's love to him, when he had given but too much cause to have it called in question, by his shameful denial of him a little before. It was not without special reason that he put the question to Peter in particular, three times over, rather than to any of the other disciples, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" John xxi. 15, 16, 17.; and when Peter vehemently professed his love, Christ tells him, that he must prove it, and shew it, by feeding his lambs and sheep, that is, by zealously endeavouring to serve and promote Christ's interest, in the diligent discharge of his ministry, for the conversion of sinners, and building up of saints. As Peter was forgiven a greater sin than any other of the disciples, it was expected that he should love Christ more, and therefore that he should be peculiarly zealous for his kingdom and glory. And this is indeed the natural fruit of love to Christ, it will make us zealous for his interest and honour. We shall be able to say with the great apostle, "To me to live is Christ."

Here it will be proper to consider the nature of zeal for Christ somewhat more particularly; and then to suggest some motives and reasons why we should be zealous for his honour and interest.

First,

First, Concerning the nature of zeal for Christ. Zeal is a natural thing, which is in some measure wrought into the constitution and temper of every man. It is the natural heat and fervour of the mind, when it is very earnest in any pursuit. Zeal therefore is either good or bad, according to its object, and according as it is under the conduct of grace, or human corruption. Sometimes zeal is a very bad thing; and it is several times spoke of in scripture in a very evil sense: it is reckoned among the works of the flesh, and is ranked with the very worst company, Gal. v. 20. where it is translated Emulation; but when it is under the influence of divine grace, and directed to a right object and end, it is then exceeding good. It is an excellent instrument of religion, and of promoting the interest and honour of Christ in this world. "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18. Christ himself was a pattern to us of holy zeal, particularly when he purged the temple, by driving out those that profaned the holy place. Then was that scripture verified in Christ, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. Such was his zeal for God's honour, that he could not bear to see his holy house profaned and turned into a common market-place. It made him humble himself to a very mean office. "He made a scourge of cords, and drove them out" with his own hands. It made him take pains and expose himself to danger, by enraging a multitude of people against him. In this Christ was a pattern of zeal to us. We should have such a zealous concern for his honour, as he has for his Father's honour. Let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus. Particularly,

1. Let us be grieved at, and resent any injuries which

which are done to his honour. A warm love to Christ will make his honour and interest as dear to us as our own; it will have a like effect on our hearts, as his love to his people has on his heart: "he is touched with a feeling of their infirmities;" and when Saul was persecuting his church and disciples, he calls it persecuting himself, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4. He resented, and seemed to feel their wrongs, as if they were his own. So will a zealous love to Christ make us feel any wrongs that are done to him. To see our dear Saviour despised and slighted by sinners, and crucified, as it were afresh, by profane and scandalous professors of his gospel; to see his precious blood and his righteousness, which he wrought out for us at so dear a rate, undervalued and despised, cannot but awaken holy zeal to a deep concern, and to a just indignation. "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word," saith David, Psal. cxix. 139. So religious Lot "was grieved and vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked," 2 Pet. ii. 7. The dishonour that was hereby done to God went near to his heart, and wounded his very soul. And such will be the effect of a true zeal for Christ, it will make us grieve for any injuries that are done to him: it will resent any contempt of him, whether by doctrinal errors, or practical wickedness.

2. Holy zeal will inspire the soul with courage in Christ's cause, as Christ's zeal for his Father's honour inspired him with courage to drive out the profaners of the temple, though he was alone, and they were a multitude. Zeal is bold as a lion, it fears not the faces, nor the frowns of men, nor private loss, nor death itself, while it is striving to

serve and honour its beloved object. Such was the zeal of Peter and John when they were strictly commanded by the magistrates, not to preach any more at all in the name of Jesus; and were severely threatned, in case they did not desist from preaching; "they answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts iv. 19, 20. Their zeal for Christ would not suffer them to be silent one day in his cause, let the consequence, as to themselves, be what it would. No more could St Paul be dissuaded by the earnest entreaties and tears of his friends from going to Jerusalem, where he had a probable prospect of serving the interest of Christ, tho' it was plainly intimated to him before he went that it would be at the hazard of his own liberty, if not of his life: "What mean you," said he, "to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xxi. 13. Thus will zeal for Christ make us ready to serve his cause and interest, even in the face of danger and death.

3. Holy zeal will make us diligent in using all proper means to gain over subjects to Christ's kingdom, and converts to his gospel. It will make us not only courageously passive, but vigorously active to serve his cause, and to promote his interest and kingdom, in our several stations, and according to our several abilities and opportunities. If Peter did indeed love Christ, as he said, he must feed his sheep, he must apply himself diligently to the work of the ministry, and labour to spread the favour of his Redeemer's name and grace; he must

must earnestly endeavour to convert sinners to his gospel, and to build up his saints for heaven."

4. Holy zeal for Christ will rejoice in the advancement of his kingdom and interest. It was a noble instance of zeal in John the Baptist, that he could, and did rejoice, in a prospect of the growing prosperity of Christ's kingdom, tho' he knew that his own personal reputation and interest in the world must be diminished and decline to make way for his. "My joy therefore is fulfilled," says he; "he must increase, but I must decrease," John iii. 29, 30. And such also was St Paul's zeal for Christ, that he could, and did heartily rejoice that Christ was preached to sinners, and his kingdom was thereby promoted, though with some such circumstances as tended to his own personal discredit. "Some," says he, "preach Christ even of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, Phil. i. 15, 16, but, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice," verse 18. There is no greater occasion of joy in the world to a zealous lover of Christ, than that sinners are converted by his grace, and subjects are brought into his kingdom, and monuments are hereby raised to his eternal honour. Thus I have set before you some of the most natural and certain effects of a true and lively zeal for Christ. Thus should we live unto him.

Let me now, before I close, lay before you some few motives and reasons why you should be zealous for Christ, to promote his interest and honour; as,

1. Consider and remember how zealous Christ has been, and is, for you and your interest. He

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died



died for you; and is not that saying enough, in one word, to recommend him to your warmest and most zealous love? What labours, what sorrows, what sufferings did his zeal to serve your cause and interest once carry him through? And yet that was not all, he rose again for you too, and he has devoted his new life to your service and interest. He now lives and appears in the presence of God for you, Christians; he is your constant advocate with the Father, in the court above; and will you not be advocates for him, and strive all you can to promote his interest in this world below? Think, O think! how very zealous Christ has been, and still is, for you and your interest. And then, sure, if your hearts are capable of any impressions of love and gratitude, you cannot but love him, you cannot but live unto him, you cannot but be zealous for his interest and glory.

2. Consider how little all you can do for Christ will amount unto, and what a mean and poor requital it will be for his love. All that he expects from you is, that you should love him, and live unto him. What is all that to what he has bore, and suffered, and done for you? What service can we do him, comparable to the service which he has done for us, in dying for our sins, saving us from hell, and eternal damnation; reconciling us to God, and obtaining for us the eternal inheritance of life and glory? What are all our little services compared with his? our little pains and self-denials for his sake, to his labours and sufferings for ours? Did he even die for us? and shall we not live unto him? Here the voice of reason and love is the very same, viz. that we ought to be most obedient to Christ, and most zealous for his interest and honour.

3. Consider

3. Consider how zealous the devil and his agents are against Christ, and to hinder the advancement of his kingdom, and should not we be at least as zealous to promote it? will not our love to him, to whom we are so infinitely obliged, do as much as their envy and malice does? Shall devils and wicked men hate Christ for no cause? and shall not we love and serve him who have so much cause? Let their spite at our Saviour inflame our zeal the more for him and his interest. Let me add once more,

(4.) That Christ will nobly requite your zeal for him another day. Though all this, and whatsoever else you can do for Christ, is nothing but a tribute which is justly due to him, for what he has done for you; yet such is his grace, that he promises to reward your zeal for him in a better world, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and angels," says Christ, Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. "They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness," who have been zealously diligent in promoting the kingdom and interest of Christ, and gaining over subjects and converts to his gospel, these shall be distinguished and rewarded with peculiar honours. "They shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3.

Now upon the whole, have we not all great and sad reason to accuse and blame ourselves for want of love and zeal for Christ? Alas! how coldly affected have we been to his interest, who has been so zealously affected towards ours! Let us humble ourselves for this, let us be sensible of our fault this day, and endeavour amendment for the time to come. And let us earnestly pray for the quicken-

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ing influences of the Holy Spirit, to blow up our little spark of love into a brighter flame, that we may feel more of its constraining power, to engage us most heartily "to live unto him who died for us, and rose again."

SERMON.

SERMON XXXVI.

Imitation of the Example of Christ in his
Temper and Life.

I JOHN II. 6.

*He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so
to walk, even as he walked.*

IT is universally acknowledged what great force there is in example, whether to corrupt or to reform mankind. Our nature is much more powerfully impressed by what we see than by what we hear. Indeed it is no small infelicity, that besides our greater proneness to imitate a bad than a good example, the instances of the former sort are far more numerous in the world than those of the latter. Yet still there is somewhat very amiable and attractive in virtue itself, which strikes the mind even of those that will not practise it, with conviction, and an inward veneration for it, as often as it is discerned, and attentively viewed. Now this is the great use of example, that it draws forth, and exposes to sight the beauteous form of religion and
virtue

virtue much more advantageously, and commands a closer attention to it than a number of the best rules and descriptions: it raises also the hopeful prospect of our reaching what we see already attained by others, and so tends to excite in us more hearty endeavours after it. Therefore a few examples on this side, or even a single one eminently distinguished, like a light set on an hill, may diffuse a lustre and influence all around. And this advantage the Christian religion claims above any that has ever appeared in the world. For a cloud of witnesses in every age has been formed under its influence to a moral temper and conduct vastly superior to what has been found in the most eminent professors and teachers of every other religion. More than this still, it furnishes out what the whole world never saw or produced another instance of, a pattern of righteousness and human virtue complete in all respects, in its own great master and founder; and it recommends along with obedience to his doctrines and commandments, which contain the best and most perfect system of morals, a conformity to himself, as fully exemplifying them. Thus the apostle John, in pursuance of one main branch of his design in this epistle, which was to lay down several marks of genuine Christianity, mentions the imitation of Christ as one in the text, after he had insisted in the three verses before on the observation of his word, as another. "He that saith he abideth in him;" whoever professes to be a Christian, one related to Christ, a receiver and expectant of all the privileges flowing from interest in him, and a subject of his kingdom, ought, in virtue of such his profession, and in evidence of its truth, "himself also so to walk, even as he walked;" that is, in the same general tenor of outward conversation led under

der the conduct of correspondent inward principles and dispositions.

In considering this subject, I shall shew,

First, In what respects Christ is an example to Christians, and they are to imitate him.

Secondly, How suitable an example he is, and how expedient it is for us to have such an example.

Thirdly, What obligations and engagements we are under to aim at an imitation of him.

First, then, let us see in what respects and with what limitations our blessed Lord is an example imitable by us. One general rule may serve sufficiently to clear this, *viz.* that Christ is only our example as to those things that are common between him and us in some or other respect; but not as to those in which we can have no participation with him, or he with us. Some duties there are which arise out of our sinful state and circumstances, and are greatly incumbent on us continually to be found in the practice of; such are the exercises of repentance for our sins, and of faith in the mercy of God and in the merits of Christ for the pardon of them. But as Christ never committed any sin, it is manifest these duties could have no place in him. His part was to become our Mediator with God, which he could never have been had he, by any sin of his own, needed a Mediator for himself; and as an example he was to represent to us the original perfection of our nature, and so to teach us to endeavour to our utmost not to make work for repentance, rather than to perform it well. On the other hand, all those works that belonged to our Lord's discharge of his mediatorial office in its several parts, as that office was appropriated

Priated to himself and incommunicable to all others, are likewise proper to himself; as we cannot attain to the doing such works as these, so neither ought we to attempt it.

It remains therefore, that our imitation of him only reaches to those actions of his life on earth which he did simply as a man under circumstances and relations common to him with other men; and chiefly to the spirit and temper expressed by him, as well in most of his extraordinary as in his ordinary actions*.

Go we on now,

Secondly, To represent how suitable an example Christ is to us, and then how expedient, it is for us to have such an example. I will attend to each of these distinctly.

I. The example of Christ is exceeding suitable to mankind; and this appears from the humanity, the notoriety, the extent, and the perfection of it.

1. From the humanity of it. If we are to learn from an example what is fit and becoming for such creatures as we are to be and to do, who, in all reason can be so proper to teach us, as one partaker of the same nature with ourselves? Neither the divine nor the angelical nature could become an exact model of human excellency and duty. The infinitely blessed and supreme Being is indeed the original standard of moral rectitude and perfection, and is so proposed to our imitation. As we were first formed and are to be renewed after his image, so we are required to "be followers of him as
" dear

* See this more fully considered in Dr Evans's Christian Temper. Vol. I. Sermon. iv.

‘ dear children,” Eph. v. 1.; and to “ be perfect “ and holy,” according to our capacity and measure, as he is absolutely, Matt. v. 48. 1 Pet. i. 16. God is a pattern to us in every thing which concerns the purity and dignity of our nature, so far as it is spiritual. His invariable and perfect exercise also of justice and benevolence, without a formal obligation from the law and authority of a superior, out of the pure rectitude of his nature, strongly claims our imitation of him in doing justice and loving mercy. But then we do not learn the practice of these virtues from God in the whole view wherein it is incumbent on us, viz. out of regard to his own authority requiring them, as well as to the intrinsic fitness and excellency of them in themselves considered. And as to the prime duties of fear, love, trust, and subjection, we owe to God himself as his own creatures, here it is impossible that he should be a pattern to us at all. No more will God’s inviolable blessedness permit that he should be an example to us of self-denial, laborious services, or a becoming demeanor under afflictions, which make a considerable part of our duty in this world.

The holy angels come indeed nearer a proper pattern to us, as they are creatures of God, and dependent on him as well as ourselves. They afford noble specimens of exalted piety, warm love, profound reverence, flaming zeal, intire and chearful devotedness to God, which are well worthy of our imitation, to which they are, together with their spotless purity, sometimes recommended. Yet still, besides that our slender acquaintance with their world allows us but a small benefit of their example, their laws and duties are different from ours in many respects, and set to an higher pitch than our inferior nature is capable of; as, on the other hand, many duties and trials of virtue arise to us from our im-

bodied state and situation here on earth, which their purer nature and better habitation exempt them from. 'Tis then only an human example which can completely suit itself to men. This will exhibit to them the very same kind of offices, and these done in the like manner, and under like circumstances of difficulty and temptation as belong to themselves; and so it will have a natural tendency to affect the mind in a more insinuating and engaging way, than different instances of virtue, or even the same in another nature. And such now is the example of Christ, who was no less truly a man than other men, though more than a meer man, even God himself manifest in the flesh. He possessed human nature entire, consisting of soul and body, with all the properties and affections of either of them, or which result from the union of both together; nor was he exempted from any of its sinless infirmities, appetites, and passions. He was born of a woman, and passed through the stages of human life from infancy to manhood as other men. He was made under the law of our nature, and lived for a course of years in our world liable to the same troubles, snares, and temptations as the rest of mankind are, only experiencing them in an uncommon degree. In a word, he was in all things made like to us, sin only excepted.

2. The notoriety of Christ's example makes it fit for general use. It is true, his life on earth was confined to one country, and to the space of a few years, removed many ages back from our times, so that the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth were never heard, and the beauty of holiness which shone out in his actions was never seen by any of us. But then the most considerable and exemplary transactions of his holy and useful life are transmitted down to us in faithful
and

and exact narratives, composed under divine inspiration in such a plain, easy, artless, and unaffected manner, as nearly resembles that simplicity of manners which reigned in the subject of them. No less than four witnesses of undoubted credit have obliged us with the history of Christ, who partly confirm the same accounts, and partly supply in their turns fresh and fuller materials. To this it may be added, that many of the Psalms indited by the spirit of prophecy as in his person, reveal much of his hidden soul, his secret and animated transactions with God, which serve mightily for our encouragement and direction.

3. His example was very extensive. The life of Jesus in our world was of such a compass, as gave scope for a great number and variety of acts of obedience of the law of God to enter into it. The space of about 34 years which it filled up, is a period that affords room for repeated exercises of the whole train of moral virtues and offices, especially where a person, as Christ was, is wholly intent on these things. No one single person can indeed sustain and fulfil all human relations at once. That therefore Christ did not this, as it was naturally impossible in respect to some of them, and inconsistent as to others with some more important part of his grand design, is not to be charged as any defect in his example. Yet it is so happily ordered by a wonderful combination of views which enter into his character, that it either directly exemplifies or contains a lively instruction into the duties of almost every station and relation in human life. Filial piety and subjection to his earthly parents, mixed with early and growing specimens of his supreme regards to his heavenly Father's will, appeared conspicuous in his private life. Nor did he disdain to teach every man to be

be well satisfied in his secular calling, and to use an industrious application to it, be it ever so mean and laborious, by following the mechanical employment of a carpenter his reputed father Joseph was of. Being all his days in circumstances of poverty, dependance, and outward difficulties, and always matching them with a temper and behaviour proper to them, he has hereby rendered his example of immediate use to the greater part of mankind who are thus disposed of by Providence. On the other hand, as being originally in the form of God, he of choice debased himself into the form of a servant, and being rich of his own grace, he made himself poor for the sake of others; he has afforded proper and powerful lessons of humility, condescension, and moderation, in all their honours and enjoyments to the rich and great of this world. Thus also, by his mild, prudent, and yet authoritative government of his own family of disciples, and by the exertion of the same wisdom and authority in all his public ministrations which held the people and their rulers too in awe; he gave instructive hints for others to rule well even in civil life, and especially in the discharge of sacred functions. The duties which belong to the conjugal and parental relations could not indeed be literally performed by Christ, as he never bore those relations. Yet is he not to all intents and purposes, and in the most advantageous manner, our teacher and example here, and so propounded in scripture, in virtue of his spiritual relation of husband and father to his church, which he fills up with corresponding affections and acts? Finally, his conversation was free, open, and affable: he neither shunned places of public resort, nor abstained from the use of the innocent enjoyments of life. No affected singularities or rigorous severities, yet always gravity,

gravity, decency, and dignity appeared through his whole behaviour. This at once ingratiated it, and adapted it to more general imitation.

4. Christ's example is absolutely perfect. There was no flaw in his whole conduct from first to last, no single blemish in his character; nothing in the least contrary to, no, nor short of the obligations of the law for human nature in its utmost latitude; nothing in him was wanting to the perfection of that nature in its primitive state of innocency. So far from this; there was an additional virtue and excellency in Christ's obedience on account of that state of trouble and sufferings which he passed through, beyond what the happy condition of upright and uncorrupted nature gave place for. By the perfect example of the blessed Jesus, we are first taught to cease to do evil, or rather, were it possible, never to begin it. For he never knew or did habitually or actually any sin, "neither was any guile found in his heart, mouth, or ways," 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 22. He kept himself altogether "separate from sin and sinners," Heb. vii. 26. His whole carriage was blameless and void of all just offence both toward God and toward all men. We may next learn of him to do well in all the comprehensive branches of our duty to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow-creatures. For he fulfilled all righteousness; and his example being commensurate with the whole law, has the authority and use of a rule; it may be relied on and followed for itself, without any further trial or examination, as no other example must be. Only the same prudence is requisite in adjusting the several parts of it to our own character and circumstances, and to their proper season and place; which is also to be used in interpreting and applying the law itself; and of such prudence our Lord was himself an illustrious

lustrious pattern, as he exactly knew and observed the just value, rank, and order of all duties in the nicest conjunctures and competitions.

Here might be a fit place of entering into the particulars of Christ's exemplary temper and conduct, of tracing his amiable features, and of presenting to view his eminent graces and virtues, which we are to transcribe and copy out. Here might be displayed the high strains of his piety toward God, his firm and regular trust in him, his superlative love to him, his delight in his service, his zeal for, and constant aim at his glory, his absolute subjection to his will and pleasure, and his fervent addresses to him on all occasions ordinary and extraordinary. Here one might tell of his complete self-possession and government, his perfect command and regulation of all his appetites and passions, his invincible meekness under the highest affronts and indignities, his unaffected humility and lowliness of mind in condescending to all ranks and degrees of men, and to the lowest stations and offices, and in studiously shunning the praise of men for his highest and most illustrious works, his diligent care in redeeming time and improving all opportunities for the honour of God and for the good of men, his contempt of this world and heavenly-mindedness, his perfect contentment with the most indigent and abject condition, and his unshaken patience under the sharpest sufferings. Here one might also spread abroad his vast and boundless philanthropy, his wonderful benignity and love to mankind, which all the labours of a life wholly devoted to their service and spent in going about and doing good would not satisfy, without his venting it in a still higher manner, by freely laying down his very life for their sakes.

But

But I must content myself with these distant glances at the several parts of Christ's finished character, and proceed to show,

II. How very expedient it is for mankind to have such an example set before them; confining myself here to what is singular and appropriate to this pattern, its being sinless and perfect.

Now this use and expediency appears, in that it tends to impress the mind with a strong sense of the reasonableness and excellency of that universal rectitude which the law requires, and to guard us against light and favourable thoughts of any deviation or iniquity. Had there been absolutely no example in our world of obedience fully answerable to the law our nature was subject to, men would too easily have been induced to conclude that the law was set too high for their nature originally, to rest satisfied in endeavouring and aiming at less than perfection, and to allow themselves in many sins as the unavoidable and innocent foibles of humanity, under the protection and countenance of ancient and modern names of good report in the world. But now the instance of Jesus in our nature yielding an unfailling obedience to the law of God, rolls away the reproach which the defection of all other men has cast both on that law and on their own nature. It vindicates its propriety and authority to the law, which it evidences to be holy, just, and good, and to lie exactly level with men's capacities, had they not by sin antecedently infeeble and perverted them. It restores to our nature its true dignity and glory, and points it out in a most attracting light, as the mark of our constant and unwearied pursuits. It furnishes out also an effectual answer to all suggestions and pleas in favour of any sin

from other authorities. For what, may the Christian now say, though other imperfect men and saints have thus and thus failed and sinned; yet my better and only perfect example Christ Jesus never so did, I have not so learned Christ.

It still adds more weight to this use of Christ's example, to consider the divinity of his person; and that, "though he was a son, yet learned he obedience," Heb. v. 8. Notwithstanding his eternal subsistence in the form of God gave him a claim to equality with God, and consequently exempted him from subjection to a law; yet when he condescended to take our nature, and with it the form of a servant, he accounted it his greatest glory, as well as his incumbent duty, to perform the most exact and universal obedience to the will of God. His human nature was the immediate principle and sole proper subject of this obedience. Yet as it was raised to a transcendent value and overflowing merit by the inseparable union of the Man Jesus to the Divine Son, so his putting himself into a capacity of yielding it which did not originally belong to him, recommends obedience to others in the most forcible manner. In this way God has glorified, as Dr Owen expresses it, a state of obedience to himself. This is the most convincing testimony that can be given to the inestimable dignity and excellency of a moral subjection in rational creatures to the holy will of God, as their highest attainable perfection.

Let it be observed farther, that the alacrity and serenity which our Lord expressed through the whole course of his life, filled as it was with so many self-denying and wearisome services, wonderfully recommends his example to our imitation, against all the apprehensions we are so ready to entertain of an inconsistency between strict holiness and self-enjoyment.

enjoyment. Who more composed, more chearful, more free from ruffles and disquietudes, more possessed of inward tranquillity and a perfect calm of spirit, than the Man Jesus appeared to be in the midst of all the labours and hardships of his life quite down to the hour and power of darkness? Then indeed his conflicts with divine desertion and wrath, for the punishment and atonement of his people's sins, were designedly so sharp and fierce as to bereave him of all joy and comfort, though still his confidence and hope did not leave him. But before that special season of pure passion, and while our Lord was advancing through the various scenes of his active services; how perfectly easy did all of them, notwithstanding the indefatigable pains which attended them, sit on him? The consciousness of his doing the things that pleased God, the sense and assurance of the Father being always with him, and the joy that was set before him, recompensed and sweetened all the difficulties of his obedience. His work carried in it a present reward, as well as insured a greater reward to come after it; and it gave him a taste and relish of pleasure which far surpassed all sensitive gratifications, and for the sake of which he could forego even what nature itself craved. In doing it, he "had meat to eat which others knew not of. His meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work," John iv. 6, 31—34.

Let us now attend to the

Third head of discourse, the obligations and engagements which Christians are under to imitate this so suitable and expedient example. And 1st, then, It was one considerable part of the design of Christ's mission into our world that he should become our pattern. I readily allow that this was not the only or even principal end of his coming.

ming. The first and chief thing in view appears to me beyond all controversy to be his acting the part of a Mediator between God and men, that he might make reconciliation to offended justice for the sins of his people by his obedience unto death. But then this does not by any means exclude the incorporation of other ends with it. As our blessed Lord in the prosecution of that grand design might fulfil other noble and worthy purposes, so it was but agreeable to Infinite Wisdom that he should, both for his own greater honour, and because he would be more capable of accomplishing them than any other person. Such plainly is the case before us. God, in the rich furniture of graces conferred on Christ's human nature, and in the exercise of them through his whole course, hath a collateral view to the sanctification of the heirs of salvation after this model, along with the prime aim at their justification through this means. This design of God is easily enough collected from the great care which is taken to record so many particulars of Christ's life in the gospel-history. But it is also often expressly declared in Scripture. So particularly, the apostle sets conformity to Christ for the whole effect of God's purposes, even all the blessings designed for his chosen, as well of glory as of grace. "Whom," says he, "he did foreknow, he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren." Rom. viii, 29. Such is the vast and extensive idea, in the mind of God, of Jesus as an exemplar to his saints! As he has therefore framed the human nature of Christ to a pre-eminence which renders it a fit standard of excellency and perfection to them; so he forms all the vessels of mercy and honour according to their measure
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after Christ, and with an eye to him as the great original. And does not this infer a strong obligation on all professed Christians in point of duty, to design the same thing, to suffer God's aim in respect to themselves, to determine and fix theirs; and so in compliance with his intention, to have Christ alway in their eye, that they may endeavour after the nearest possible resemblance of him? How vain will it be for any to expect the benefits of Christ's death, who have no conformity to his spirit and life; as both together constitute the whole and undivided design God will answer by him on all who are saved! Into this our Christian vocation is resolved. "Hereunto," says the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 21. "ye are called, Christ leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps." And so himself lays out the end and use, in regard to his disciples, of one instructive action of his life, as a sample of others; "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you," John xiii. 15. But that leads me to observe,

2. Imitation of Christ is frequently made express matter of duty to all christians. How often is following him proposed by himself as the great term and character of discipleship? He recommends also particular graces and duties as well as the whole of them as first and fully exemplified by himself. So he addresses his disciples, "Take my yoke upon you," that yoke which I have first bore myself, before I impose it by my authority on you, and "learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29. So he commands them again, to "love one another, even as he loved them," John xv. 12. Several general and particular exhortations we meet with to the same purpose in the apostolical writings. "Be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: let the same
" mind

“mind be in you as was also in Christ Jesus,” says St Paul, Rom. xv. 5. Phil. ii. 5. “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind,” says St Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 1. Thus the same divine authority and wisdom, which is imprinted on the commands themselves, that require universal holiness from us, prescribes the imitation of Jesus as itself a constant duty, a stated and necessary part of our religion, and an instrument to our doing all the rest well, and it leaves us not at liberty to regard his example or not*. All other examples are propounded, not only restrictively, but occasionally to our use and imitation. But Christ’s is set before us, both as our ultimate and only infallible example, which as a rule, measures and limits all others, and also as challenging our daily and steady attention. The apostle expresses the former difference in his own case, when he exhorts the Corinthians to “be followers of him, even,” and only so far, “as he was of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1. He intimates the latter, by directing the Hebrews, after he had encompassed them with a great cloud of other witnesses to center their views on Christ; looking, says he, with and above all these, principally and permanently “to Jesus the author and finisher of your faith, Heb. xii. 1, 2.

3. The relations which pass between Christ and all true christians are binding and engaging reasons for

* The original gospel-duty which animates and rectifies all others, is a design for conformity to Christ in all the gracious principles and qualifications of his holy soul, wherein the image of God in him doth consist. As he is the prototype and exemplar in the eye of God for the communication of all grace unto us; so he ought to be the great example in the eye of our faith in all our obedience unto God. Owen on the person of Christ, p. 216.

for their endeavouring after the fullest similitude of temper and manners to him; which is the very consideration from which our text derives this obligation. Is he our Lord and Master, who has not only taught us the whole of our duty, but practised it himself? Thus in his part does he not exceed all other teachers? Why then should not we in ours, which is to learn of him, exceed all other disciples? These have usually been zealous of following the peculiar rules and ways of their masters, and too often where they have been whimsical, or even culpable; and shall we not much more feel the force of this tie, in respect to the best doctrine and life meeting in perfect harmony in Jesus our divine teacher? Is he also our best of friends, and not ashamed to call us his brethren, his children, and his spouse? and is he never wanting on his part to the indearing kindness and good offices of such intimate relations? Do not these naturally suggest to us a desire and care of resembling him, that we may not, for want of this and of suitable returns on our part, disgrace the relations he is pleased to own us under? Is he our head, and are we his members closely linked and united to him? How strongly does this demand a likeness, a symmetry, a proportion and correspondence between all the parts of one and the same body! and how unseemly and monstrous would it be, if, like Nebuchadnezzar's image, while the head is of pure gold, any of the members should be no better than miry clay!

4. This is the natural result and tendency of all christian graces, of those regards we peculiarly owe to the blessed Jesus: so that where they are in truth, they cannot but work this way, and otherwise they are only in appearance and pretence, not in reality. Can we heartily believe in Christ, as
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it imports a realizing, satisfying, intellectual view of his invisible spiritual beauties and glories, and not discern enough in him which is infinitely worthy of our imitation? and beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, how can we but be changed in some measure, and spring forward with holy emulation and ambition of being more and more changed "in-
 "to the same image from glory to glory!" 2 Cor. iii. 18. Have we a believing trust and hope in Christ, whether of spiritual blessings here, or of eternal glory hereafter, which are all connected among themselves, and prepared to be dispensed to believers, in conformity to the grace and glory that is in him? Is not "every man that hath this hope in him" naturally led by it, to "purify himself even as he is
 "pure?" 1 John iii. 3. Finally, who does not know that Love is of an assimilating nature and force? and may it not be expected here to have the greater energy, as Christ of his own grace has first conformed himself to our state of misery, as low as he could stoop, in order to raise us out of it?

5. And lastly, The honour of Christ and his religion is deeply concerned in this matter. Thou wilt certainly lose, O professing christian! all thy hopes from Christ, who will profit thee nothing at all, and disown thee at last as none of his, if thou livest in a contradiction to his holy example. This to thyself indeed would be very bad and dreadful; yet it were well if the mischief stopt here, and thou who hast deserved and procured it, couldst bear it alone. But what is a thousand times worse, Christ himself and his gospel will suffer in this case, and be unjustly reproached by thy means. When the professors of Christianity are not like to Christ, but in reverse of his real character and religion, are proud, furious, covetous, unjust, intemperate, ungodly, the
 master

master will be liable to be judged of in the world, according to what his pretended disciples appear to be, the holy Jesus accounted like to unholy professors, and the immaculate Lamb of God traduced over again as "a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And have we then any spark of ingenuity, any tenderness and concern for the glory of our Redeemer? It will surely rouse at this hint: it will not suffer us to be easy under the thought of contributing to such vile and injurious imputations on the person to whom we are so much indebted. On the contrary, will it not, should it not blaze out into a vehement solicitude, that according to the just character of real Christians, we may be "manifestly declared to be" living "recommendatory epistles of Christ Jesus," 2 Cor. iii. 3. O how concerned should we be, now he is no longer personally in this world, to show in ourselves what he was while in it, and to cause him to live still and prolong his days even on earth in his seed expressing his true likeness, that thus "his name may be remembered in all generations?" By such a faithful though very short representation of temper and life of Jesus in ourselves, we shall maintain the honour of Christ's name and gospel in the world; and at the same time we shall both derive the greatest honour on our own character, and enjoy this "life of Christ manifested in our mortal bodies" here below, as a sure earnest of our living with him in his glory and immortality above in heaven.

O may the same Spirit who formed Christ so glorious and illustrious an example to the church, form him in our hearts and lives! May he begin and go on to make bright and durable impressions of the excellency and glory of his image shining in the gospel on our minds, that we may have an high and grateful sense of our privilege in enjoying Christ's

example as greater than they had who lived before his appearance, that we may so intently eye, and diligently study our pattern as to be inamoured with it, and that we may so know and love it as to be made comfortable to it. May he kindle in us penitent relentings for the great dissimilitude in ourselves and the Christian world in general, to the professed founder and example of our religion; and may he teach us the believing use and value of our Lord's obedience and righteousness, as never failing of its virtue and merit to absolve and justify us still, as often as we fail in our regards to it as our pattern, provided only we allow not of these defects, and earnestly design a real and growing conformity to it! Amen.

SERMON XXXVII.

Christian Baptism.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

IN all the religions which God hath prescribed to mankind, there have ever been some outward rites or ceremonies appointed for man to perform, whereby God would represent the blessings of his own grace, and whereby men might profess their humble acceptance of those blessings, and their own correspondent obligations to duty. These are a sort of seals of the covenant of grace between God and man: such were sacrifices, which we have good reason to believe were appointed to Adam just after his fall, when the Lord God made them coats of the skins of beasts which were sacrificed: such was the rite of circumcision given to Abraham and his children: such were the numerous trains of ceremonies or ordinances which were prescribed to the Jews by the hand of Moses, wherein, by many offerings made by fire, by washings and sprinklings

sprinklings of water and of blood, the blessings of the covenant of grace were described in a sort of emblem or typical language ; and the people gave up themselves to the Lord in a way of covenant according to the several appointed rules of duty.

In the religion or gospel of Christ, there are but two ordinances of this kind instituted for Christians to observe, *i. e.* Baptism, which is performed by water, and the Lord's Supper, which is celebrated by bread and wine. The institution of Baptism is contained in the words of my text, "Go ye and teach all nations, (or make disciples of them, as it is in the Greek (baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : and I am with you," to authorize this practice and to bless you therein, "even to the end of the world." The Lord's Supper is represented in 1 Cor. xi. 26. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Thus it appears, that both of them are to continue till the Redeemer comes the second time, and puts an end to this world.

Baptism is my present subject, and in order to give you a brief sketch of it, I shall set the most important parts thereof before you in this plain easy method, as I think they may be derived from scripture.

I. I shall consider what this ordinance of baptism is, and what it doth imply or signify.

II. Who are the persons to whom it is to be administered.

III. In what manner this ceremony is to be performed.

IV. What practical inferences or exhortations may be drawn from this subject.

First,

First, What is baptism, and what is implied in it, or intended by it? The ordinance itself, *i. e.* Christian baptism, is the washing a person with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When it was first introduced by John the Baptist, it was but imperfect, and therefore it was repeated in the name of Christ to the Ephesians, who had received the baptism of John before, Acts xix. 3, 4, 5. And even as our Lord himself practised it in the days of his personal ministry, it did not seem to be drawn out into its complete form: John baptized his disciples, pointing their faith to Jesus, who should come after him: Jesus might possibly baptize into his own name as a great prophet, but not under the character of the Messiah, since he kept that point very much concealed from his common followers or disciples in his life-time. However, all that was done both under the ministry of Christ, and of John the Baptist, seem to be continued and included in this most perfect form of baptism, which our Lord appointed to his apostles after his resurrection from the dead, and just before his ascent to heaven. Whatsoever I find therefore in baptism of John, as well as of Christ himself or his apostles, I may reasonably presume are contained also in the outward form, and in the spiritual signification of Christian baptism.

Let us consider now, What doth this baptism, this washing with water, mean and imply in a spiritual sense. And under most of the following particulars, I shall endeavour to shew what is the use of the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, in this ordinance.

I. Christian baptism implies a humble acknowledgment of some defilement; otherwise there would

would be no need of washing. Sin is often represented in scripture as a matter of uncleanness, which pollutes the soul, and this it doth two ways. *First*, The principle of sin within us defaces the image of God, which was stamped on man in his first creation, and thereby it renders us unfit for the presence of God, and communion with him, as he is a God of spotless holiness: and, *Secondly*, The guilt of our actual sins exposes us to his punishing justice on account of the breach of his law, for every sin is a transgression of the law of God and deserves death. Whosoever therefore is baptized, doth profess and declare that he is a defiled creature, a sinner; that he is guilty in the sight of God, and lies exposed to his anger, that he is unfit to converse with him, or to stand before him. So the Jews who attended on the ministry of John, Matt. iii. 6. "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins;" and therefore they came to the water seeking to be purified. The foundation of our hope and salvation is laid in the acknowledgement of our misery. This acknowledgment is eminently made to God the Father, as sustaining the character of supreme Governor of the world, whom we have offended by sin.

II. Baptism implies a belief of the blessed provision which God hath made in his gospel for the purification of our souls from sin, and all its defilements.

(1.) He provided for the removal of the guilt of sin; for he sent his own Son Jesus Christ to take flesh and blood upon him, that he might die to make atonement for the sins of men, and that God, without dishonour to his governing justice, might pardon repenting sinners. This is sometimes called in scripture, "washing away our sins by the blood of Christ," 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5. And for

for this reason the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling, Heb. xii. 24. Now this is particularly applied to baptism, Acts xxii. 16. Ananias said to Paul, "Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus." Therefore baptism is called the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," Mark i. 4.

(2.) God hath also provided for the removal of the principle of sin, which defiles the soul of man, by the persuasive arguments of his gospel, which was revealed by the Spirit of God, and by the powerful operations of this Spirit on his heart. It is the Spirit of God, who is appointed to work on the dark and sinful mind of man, to change his corrupt nature, enlighten his mind, and give him a new bent and byas toward holiness. This is called renewing us by his Spirit, regenerating us, or causing us to be "born again by the Spirit, giving us a new heart and a new spirit, sprinkling clean water upon us, and making us clean, and pouring out his Spirit upon men, and their seed," John iii. 3, 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 35. Isai. xlv. 3. This also is in scripture applied to the ordinance of baptism, and therefore we are said to "be born of water and of the Spirit," John iii. 5. And the washing of regeneration is explained by the "renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly, Tit. iii. 5.

But here I would stay to observe, that though both the ceremonies of the gospel, baptism and the Lord's supper, do in some sort represent both these methods of purification from sin. *i. e.* by the atoning blood of Christ and by his sanctifying Spirit: yet the Lord's supper more expressly represents the death and blood of Christ, and so more naturally and properly shews forth our pardon

don and justification from the guilt of sin by the atonement which Christ hath made, whereas it is the more peculiar office of baptism, to represent our regeneration or sanctification by the Spirit of God, or the cleansing our natures from the power and principle of sin, by pouring the Holy Spirit upon us under the emblem of water, by which emblem in scripture the Spirit of God is often exhibited to us.

However, in general it is to be acknowledged, that Christian baptism in the compleatness of it, implies a belief of both these blessings, even these provisions of God the Father, for the cleansing us both from the guilt and from the principle of sin by the blood of Christ, and the operation of his Spirit: and I take this to be one reason why we are baptised in the name of the Father, as the author of these blessings, and of the Son and Spirit, as divine mediums to procure and convey them.

3. The next thing implied in Christian baptism is a humble acceptance of these blessings in the method of God's own appointment; that is, by repentance for sin in the sight of God, by faith in Jesus Christ his Son, and by seeking the influences of the Holy Spirit, and obeying them. When we come under this ordinance, we do as it were by way of action and emblem consent to accept of this purification, both from the guilt and principle of sin; we repent and are ashamed of our past iniquities; we trust in Jesus Christ and his atonement for pardon; we declare our desire to become new and holy creatures, by the cleansing and purifying power of the Spirit of God in the gospel; and therefore when persons professed their belief in Christ, and repentance of their sins, they were baptised; and those who were sincere were inwardly

inwardly cleansed from their defilements, and received both these blessings. See 1 Cor. vi. 11, when the apostle had been reckoning up many vile pollutions of the inhabitants of Corinth before their conversion, "and such were some of you," saith he, "but ye are washed" in baptism as a token and seal that you are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God." Faith and repentance were the great things required of those who were admitted to baptism. This was the practice of John, this the practice of the apostles in the history of their ministry. Did John the forerunner of Christ preach "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins?" Matt. iii. so St Peter, Acts ii. 38. "Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." Did John call them to "believe in Jesus who should come after him?" Acts xix. 4. so Philip the Evangelist saith to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, i. e. in Jesus as the Son of God, thou mayest be baptised," Acts viii. 37. "He answered, I believe;" and Philip baptised him.

And here the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, are of great use and importance again. When we are baptised into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, we do humbly accept of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Father and our God: we accept of the Son of God as our Saviour, especially by the blood of his sacrifice, and of the Holy Spirit as our sanctifier by his gospel, and his powerful influences.

4. Baptism implies also, by necessary consequence, a profession of our obligation to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and our engagement to act consistently with this solemnity; that is, to

live agreeably to these favours we receive from God, (*viz.*) the pardon of our sins, and the sanctification of our souls; to watch against sin for time to come, to abstain from all pollutions of flesh and spirit; for we are not washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ, that we may defile ourselves again. We engage to carry on the work of repentance and mortification of sin all our lives, as well as to live upon Christ by faith for the remission of daily rising transgressions. In short, it includes a holy resolution through the grace of Christ, and by the aids of his Spirit to follow every other means which God hath appointed for the rooting out of sin, with all its defilements, from the soul, and restoring us to purity and holiness, and the likeness of God. Thus baptism becomes a seal of the covenant of grace between God and men, an acceptance of his blessings, and engagement to their correspondent duties, even as "circumcision was to Abraham a seal of his justification by faith," Rom. iv. 11. and an eminent proof and assurance of his obedience. Persons who desire baptism, and yet will not take these obligations upon them, have no claim to this ordinance: And therefore John drove away the Scribes and Pharisees from this baptism, because they would not "bring forth fruits meet or repentance," Mat. iii. 7.

5. Baptism being significant of all these blessings and these duties, it becomes the appointed ceremony and sign of professing the whole Christian religion, and the rite or form of entering into the visible church of Christ. Those who are baptised are professed Christians; they are avowed disciples of Christ. And herein also the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, have their proper plain significancy. Baptism is a profession of the religion which was contrived by the wisdom and grace of God the Father, it was published and preached

preached to the world by Jesus Christ his Son, and it was confirmed and established by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit. It implies also a resolved obedience to the authority and commands of the Father a professed belief of the gospel as taught us by the Son, with a dependence on the grace and salvation of Christ as carried on by all his offices of prophet, priest, and king, together with a compliance with all the outward discoveries, and all inward influences of the Holy Spirit. This is the duty, and these are the engagements of every professor of Christianity. As circumcision was the mode of entrance into the Jewish church, and becoming a professed disciple of Moses, and hereby an obligation arose to perform and practise the whole Jewish law, Gal. v. 3. so by baptism we lay ourselves under a holy obligation to practise the whole religion of Christ, and to wait for all his promised blessings. We hope for the love and grace of the Father, the salvation of Jesus Christ his Son, and the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Ghost; and we are hereby devoted to the service and honour of the blessed Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Spirit; whose adorable unity in respect of the Godhead, and whose three distinctions, in respect of their personal characters, have been set before you at large in a former sermon on this same text.

Having said thus much in describing the ceremony itself, and what is the spiritual meaning of it, we come now, in the second place, to enquire, who are the subjects of this ordinance of baptism, or to whom it is to be administered.

To this I answer, The first, the most proper, or at least the most evident subjects of it, are persons who confess their sins, and profess to re-

pent of them, and who accept of this grace and salvation offered in the gospel:—those who have been taught the chief doctrines and duties of the gospel of Christ, and profess to believe and receive them, and to comply with them:—those who take upon them the religion of Christ, become his disciples, and give up their names to him. Here is no difference, whether Greek or Jew, whether male or female, as there was in the Jewish ceremony of circumcision, which belonged properly to the Jewish nation, and admitted none but males: but all professors of the gospel must receive this ceremony, and be baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and this is the most common account the New Testament gives us of this matter, that when persons professed their faith in Christ, they were baptised. Texts of this kind need not to be cited, they are so numerous.

But in the Christian church from its early ages, and we think from the apostles time, it hath been the custom also to baptise the infant children of professed Christians; and though there be no such express and plain commands or examples of it written in scripture, as we might have expected, yet there are several inferences to be drawn from what is written, which afford a just and reasonable encouragement to this practice, and guard it from the censure of superstition and will-worship. This has been a long and troublesome dispute indeed among the churches since the reformation: I shall not pretend to debate it here, but only rehearse a few hints of argument, which are commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptising children, *viz.*

1. That ever since God called the family of Abraham, and settled his visible church in it, he

has

has never suffered it to fail. It was an everlasting covenant that he made with "Abraham, to be his God, and the God of his seed," Gen. xvii. that he might be the Father both of Jews and Gentiles, who were brought into the church, as in Rom. iv. 11, 16.

2. The Jewish and the Christian church are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations and ordinances. The same spiritual promises and blessings which belonged to the church under the Old Testament, belong also to it under the new, Acts ii. 39. 2 Cor. i. 20. Abraham is represented as the root or stock of the visible church, Rom. xi. 16, 17, &c. The Jewish church are the natural branches of it, the Gentiles are ingrafted into the same stock, ver. 17, 24. and partake of the blessings of it.

3. The children of the Jews were visible members of the Jewish church under the covenant of Abraham, and as such they were recognized, acknowledged and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance. Now circumcision was a seal in general, both of spiritual blessings, and outward privileges, Rom. iv. 11. A seal of the righteousness of faith, as well as of the possession of Canaan, and of the covenant of grace, as well as of the covenant of Sinai.

4. The children of Christians were never cut off from this privilege, when the fathers were received into the church, whether they were Jews or Gentiles; and therefore they are to be reckoned at least a sort of incomplete members of the Christian church also, under spiritual promises and blessings. When the Jews, the natural branches, were cut off from the good olive tree, their little buds were cut off with them also, and

and when the Gentiles, by a profession of faith, were grafted in as foreign branches, their little buds were grafted in with them. Christ received the children that were brought by the hands of their believing parents, and "laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. x. 13—16. The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets, do refer to the Gentile church as well as the Jewish, Isa. xlv. 3, 5. Isa. lxxv. 23. Joel ii. 28, 29. For 'tis the blessing of Abraham, which reaches to his seed, "that comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ," Gal. iii. 14. Rom. xv, 8, 9. "that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy."

5. As this sort of reasoning seems to manifest the right of the children of Christians to these blessings, or that they have some interest in this covenant, so there are some considerations which render it very probable that children should be admitted into the visible church, by the Christian door of entrance, that is baptism. As for instance,

First, That circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from Col. ii. 12. where the apostle argues, that being baptised we need not be circumcised: And besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, *i. e.* the removal of sin, one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

Again, The gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: It takes away yokes and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, Acts xv.

10. but does not diminish its honours, titles and privileges.

Yet further, when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptised together with themselves, even where there is no mention that the household believed in Christ also: As in the case of Lydia and Stephanas, Acts xvi. 15. 1 Cor. i. 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

In the last place, children under the New Testament are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the Old. 'Tis granted, indeed, they neither could then nor can now understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the seal of circumcision or of baptism, as a bond laid upon them in infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties at riper years, and as an encouragement to wait and hope for the blessings. This was the case of Jewish infants, and why may not Christians be favoured with it also?

I proceed now to the third general enquiry, (*viz.*) What is the manner of performing this ceremony, which also I shall dispatch in a brief hint or two. The Greek word *baptizo* signifies to wash any thing, properly by water coming over it: Now there are several ways of such washing, (*viz.*) sprinkling water on it in small quantity, pouring water on it in large quantity, or dipping it under water, either in part or in whole: and since this seems to be left undetermined in Scripture to one particular mode, therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the Greek word signifies washing a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always dipping, is argued by learned men, not only from ancient Greek authors but from the New Testament itself, as Luke xi,

38. "The Pharisees marvelled that Jesus had "not first washed before dinner;" in Greek, that he "was not first baptised;" and can it be supposed that they would have had him dip himself in water? Mark vii. 4. "The Pharisees, when "they come from the market, eat not except they "are washed," *i. e.* baptised; surely it cannot mean, except they were dipped: And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not necessarily signify dipping them; for the manner of washing their hands of old was by pouring water on them, as "Elisha "poured water on the hands of Elijah," 2 Kings iii. 11. Yet further they practised the washing of tables (in Greek, of beds) as well as cups and vessels. Now beds could not usually be washed by dipping, Heb. ix. 10. The Jews had divers washings prescribed by Moses, (in Greek, baptisms) which were sprinkling and pouring water on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. 1 Cor. xii. 2. The children of "Israel were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea," in their passage through the Red-Sea, at their march from Egypt; not that they were dipped in the water, but they were sprinkled by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Besides, it is said further on this head, that pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism, (*viz.*) the sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the conscience, or the pouring out the Spirit on the person baptised, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the Spirit; all which are the things signified in baptism, as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

But

But this shall suffice for a hint of this controversy; which has filled large volumes in the world, made a huge noise in the church, and destroyed the charity of a multitude of Christians. Since I do not here profess to enter into the argument, but only to give a few short notices or rehearsals of what is said in our vindication who practise the baptism of infants by sprinkling water on them, I do the rather ask leave to speak one charitable word on this subject, (*viz.*) that since this controversy has considerable difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere soul, in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions; and the things wherein we agree are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren who reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance, and in our reverence for it: we all agree that the children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the utmost privileges into which Scripture admits them, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty; and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing, that we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ by this ceremony a little sooner, or a little later than others; or because some devote their children to God in baptism as a claim of privileges and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves; whereas others let this claim and obligation alone till children themselves are capable of acting therein: or because some of us think this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body be immersed in it; others suppose

a little is sufficient, and that he who hath the face or head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of gospel benefits and obligations as he who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviour thought so when he washed Peter's feet. John xiii. 10. In short, where faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, are made necessary to salvation and agreed upon by us all, 'tis pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy and scandalous contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.

Having given you some account of the subjects of this ordinance, and the manner of performance, I cannot finish this head without adding, that since every thing under the New Testament is sanctified by the word and prayer, it is generally most proper to administer this ordinance, with a word of exhortation or instruction to men, and a prayer lifted up to God in the name of Christ, that the blessings of grace may accompany this ordinance, that it may not be a vain or empty sign, but may be attended with special and divine graces.

I come now to the last thing which I proposed, and that is to mention a few practical exhortations relating to the point in hand.

Exhortation 1. Adore the wisdom of God, and give thanks to his goodness, who hath appointed such sensible helps to our faith, such sensible memorials of his grace and our duty. True religion is in a great measure an inward and spiritual thing; but it is of vast importance towards the preservation of any particular religion in the world, to have some of the most considerable points of it held forth or represented in visible ceremonies,

to strike the senses of men, and to dwell upon their imagination. The God of nature knows our frame, how much we are touched and affected with things sensible, and therefore he hath condescended to deal with us in this manner in all ages of his church; and upon this account the two chief blessings of the New Testament, *viz.* Cleansing from the defiling principles of sin by the Holy Spirit, and washing from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, are held forth to our senses in the two great ordinances of the gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Words and discourses, precepts and promises, given out by the lips of men, oftentimes vanish into the air, and are lost and forgotten: writings are preserved indeed, but all men are not learned nor know letters; and though our age be blest with so much knowledge, yet multitudes in all former ages could not so much as read. But these sensible emblems and ceremonies preserve the articles of our holy religion in the blessings and in the duties of it from age to age, and write them upon the memory of the unlearned, and that in lasting characters. Blessed be God for his condescending goodness in such an evangelical ceremony!

Exhortation 2. Let us enquire into the spiritual meaning of all Christian ordinances, and never content ourselves with the mere outward forms, without enjoying the blessing signified thereby, and practising the respective duties. Children should enquire of their parents when they see a child washed with water, and say, "What is the meaning of this washing? and what are we to understand by the use of these names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?" And parents should be able and willing to instruct their children, and teach

them these important points of their holy religion, viz. that they are under a defilement by sin, they are to be washed from the guilt of it in the blood of Christ, and to be cleansed and purified from the principles of it by the renewing grace of the Spirit. So it was among the Jews, Exodus xii. 26, 27. and “when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? then ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians:” and thus should it be among Christians. But remember, that washing with water in ever so solemn a manner, and using these sacred names with ever so great seriousness by the minister, doth not profit the persons baptized, if they still continue to wallow in their sinful pollutions, and take no care to seek purification of heart and life. You may be washed with the water of baptism, and yet be driven down to hell among the polluted souls.

Exhortation 3. Do not think yourselves exempt or excused from this ceremony, though you are possessors of all the graces signified thereby. Christ himself passed under it, Matt. iii. Those who had received the Holy Spirit received baptism also, Acts x. 47. “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?” As there must be faith in order to salvation, so it is the common and appointed way of God, that there should be baptism too, Mark xvi. 16. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” A wilful and entire neglect and contempt of any ordinance of Christ gives too much reason to suspect whether there be any true faith.

Exhortation 4. Take all proper occasions to refresh the sense of your baptism on your spirits, and

to act over again between God and your own souls all that baptism implies, though the ceremony itself be but once to be administered to you. When you see baptism administered unto others, remember you yourselves were once baptized; recall the season when you were thus washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Acknowledge your defilement by nature and by practice: "Go to the laver that is opened for sin and uncleanness," even the fountain of the blood of Jesus; seek the fresh influences of the purifying Spirit to cleanse you from all impurities of your heart, and to make you clean and holy. Give up yourselves afresh with sacred pleasure to God as your Father, to Jesus as your Saviour, to the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier: renew the surrender of yourselves to Christ as his disciples, and engage yourselves afresh to be the Lord's.

Exhortation 5. Be very watchful to answer all the engagements of your Christian baptism, to guard yourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and to grow up into greater degrees of holiness and purity. It was a happy and successful defence against temptations in the primitive days, when the Christian could say "I am baptized." Let this also be the constant language of our souls; "I am washed in the sacred laver of regeneration, how shall I defile myself again? I am devoted and consecrated to Christ, how shall I estrange myself from him? Forgive, O Lord, all my shameful pollutions, since I have been washed in the Christian baptism; and guard me, O blessed Spirit, against every new defilement, that I may be presented before my God and my Saviour without spot or blemish in the day of his public glory and of my complete joy. Now
" to

“ to him who is able to keep us from falling, and
“ to present us faultless before the presence of his
“ glory with exceeding joy ; to the only wise God
“ our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion
“ and power, both now and ever.” Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

1 CORINTHIANS XI. 23, 24, 25, 26.

23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread :*
24. *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you : This do in remembrance of me.*
25. *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood : This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*
26. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

WE have here a large and particular account of the divine institution of the Lord's supper, as the apostle received it from Christ himself: it agrees exactly with the relations of St. Matthew and Luke, only they acquaint us with the particular time of year when the sacrament was instituted,

instituted, namely, in the evening of the passover, as our text does with its relation to our Saviour's death, that it was the same night in which he was betrayed. St Matthew mentions the giving thanks with the cup; which is evidently implied in our text, when it is said, he gave thanks with the bread, and "after the same manner took the cup." From whence I would observe, that the Lord's supper is a sacrament, wherein by visible signs and figures the benefits of Christ's death are represented and applied: The word SACRAMENT is not to be found in scripture, but is derived from a custom of the Romans, who when they listed soldiers for their armies, administered an oath of fidelity, which they called *Sacramentum*, from whence the ancient fathers of the Christian church have applied the term to the Lord's supper, because it is a ratifying our fidelity to our Lord and Captain, and a renewing our covenant-engagements to his service.

The elements in the Lord's supper are bread and wine: the first, for a memorial of the body of Christ, put to death on the cross, as a true and proper propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, THIS IS MY BODY. The latter, to represent his blood shed for many for the remission of sins; THIS IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD. There is a manifest allusion in both to the paschal lamb which was to be slain, and eat, and the blood sprinkled upon the posts of the doors, as a memorial of God's passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew the first-born of the Egyptians, *Exod. xii. 13. 14.* For our better understanding the nature and design of this institution, I shall endeavour,

First, To explain it, by giving a short paraphrase upon the words of the text.

Secondly,

Secondly, Make some general observations upon them.

Thirdly, Prove the obligation of all professing Christians to comply with this institution.

Fourthly, Answer some enquiries relating to it. And,

Fifthly, Consider the ends and uses of the whole.

First, I am to explain the institution of the Lord's supper; in order to which it will be proper to take notice of the distinct actions of our Saviour and the disciples.

(1.) Of the actions of our Saviour; who first took the bread and GAVE THANKS, or blessed it; praying it might answer the ends of the institution, and serve as a memorial of his body, which was to be the great atonement for his church; that it might invigorate the faith of his disciples, and support their hope under the trials and sufferings they were to encounter in their way to heaven. In allusion to this, our Saviour calls himself the Bread of Life, and declares, his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. After he had blessed the bread, HE BRAKE IT, to signify the astonishing sufferings of his body; for though a bone of him was not to be broken, yet he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. In the garden he sweat great drops of blood. In the high priest's hall he was scourged, spit upon, mocked by the soldiers, and had a crown of thorns put upon his head; and after he had carried his own cross to the place of execution, his hands and feet were nailed to it; and when he had been lifted up, and exposed to the reproaches of them that passed by, for six hours, his very heart's blood was let out with a spear. In this severe and self-abasing manner did the Son of God bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows, being stricken, and smitten of

God and afflicted ; the sorrows of death encompassed him, and the pains of hell took hold of him, insomuch, that in the article of death, he cried with a loud voice, as a person in the utmost distress, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! ” The next action of our Saviour was his distributing the bread to his disciples at the table, with these words, TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU ; as if he should say, My body is not to suffer for any evil it has done, for my worst enemies cannot charge me with sin, but it is to be broken and crucified for your sins : therefore take and eat, apply it to yourselves, and feed thereon by faith, for it is a memorial of my sufferings, as it follows, “ This do in remembrance of me,” and do it frequently ; “ for as often as you do this, ye do shew forth the Lord’s death till he come again. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped,” that is, after the manner he had taken the bread, by blessing it, or, giving thanks, according to the custom of the Jews, when they had ate the passover ; and then delivered it to his disciples saying, THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD ; that is, a memorial of the new covenant, to be ratified and confirmed by the shedding of my blood ; “ This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” The command is repeated, This do ye ; that is, Come to my table, and drink of this cup, and as often as ye drink remember me your Saviour and your friend, call to mind my bloody sweat, and the streams that flowed from my wounded side on the cross ; remember whose blood it was ; not the blood of a meer creature, but of God ; and the ends and purposes for which it was shed ; as an atonement to offended justice, and a perpetual fountain for uncleanness : consider the extremity of

of my sufferings; that as the blood of the creature is the soul of it, so my very soul was made an offering for sin; all which was of the greatest importance to your salvation; for without shedding of this blood, there could be no remission, no reconciliation with God, nor title to the kingdom of heaven. Drink ye, therefore, of this cup as often as ye have opportunity, to preserve your claim to these invaluable blessings.

2. The actions of the disciples are not expressed in the words of the text, but implied: "They received the bread and wine;" by which they declared their belief in, and acceptance of the gospel covenant; for the elements of the Lord's Supper are the witnesses between God and us; and when we receive them into our hands, we do in the most solemn manner devote ourselves to God upon the terms of the covenant, professing our faith in it, and our hearty acceptance and approbation of it. This is further confirmed, by our "eating the bread, and drinking the wine," which represents our union with Christ, and our participation of the blessings of the covenant: upon this account the Lord's Supper is compared to a feast; not so much with regard to the materials, of which it is composed, as of the pleasure that arises to the believing soul, from the transactions between God and him, whereby the blessings of grace and glory, and even God himself is made over to him as his everlasting portion. 'Tis added by St Matthew, that at the close of the solemnity they sung an hymn, as an expression of their joy in God, and a thankful acknowledgement of the great love of Christ in accomplishing their redemption. This is a short and plain account of the institution.

Secondly, I proceed now to make some observations upon it. And,

B b 2

Observe,

Observe, 1. The Lord's Supper is a standing ordinance, to be continued in the church till his coming; this appears from the words of our text, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Those who apprehend this institution at an end, imagine, by the coming of Christ in this place, we are to understand his coming in the spirit, or his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to the former, it is certain the Spirit was already poured out before the apostle Paul's conversion; and consequently before he received this from the Lord. Besides, the primitive Christians, after that event, continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, "and in breaking of bread," and in prayers, Acts ii. 42. Nor can it be understood of his coming to destroy the city of Jerusalem, and put an end to the Jewish government and commonwealth, because the primitive Christians, in the very first age of the church, continued this solemnity in their nocturnal assemblies, when they were persecuted by the Roman emperors; nor has it been discontinued, through the several ages of christianity to this day. Besides, the very design of the institution, which was to be a memorial of the death of Christ, must imply its continuance to the end of the world; for have not we, who live in these last times, as much reason to remember our absent Saviour, as the apostles had? Do we not profess the same faith in his death, and expect the same benefits from it? Nothing therefore can be more evident, than that it was designed as a standing ordinance for the service of the church to the end of time.

Obs. 2. All that believe in the atonement of Christ, and adorn their profession with a suitable conduct and behaviour, have an undoubted title to this privilege.

vilege. 'Tis generally agreed, that infidels, who do not believe the gospel, and persons of immoral and profane lives, have no right to the table of the Lord; but all who believe and obey the gospel, to the best of their ability, are invited and will be graciously accepted; therefore says the apostle in the 28th verse of this chapter, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Every man is best judge of his own integrity and qualifications as a Christian, let him therefore examine whether he heartily repents of his sins, and resolves in good earnest to forsake them, whether he believes that Jesus is the Christ, and that the sacrifice of his death was the great propitiation and atonement for mankind: let him consider the nature of the gospel-covenant, and whether he is willing to give his deliberate consent to it, in order to his being entitled to the privileges it confers. In short, let him approve himself to his own heart, as a good Christian, and one that desires to celebrate the Lord's Supper with a grateful commemoration of the love of his Saviour, and with true charity to all his faithful disciples and followers, and he may depend upon the divine acceptance and blessing; and surely such a profession attended with a correspondent life and conversation, ought to satisfy any Christian church or society, in admitting us to their fellowship; for, after all the curious enquiries of men, who have narrowed the christian communion, and by their subtleties discouraged the attempts of weak Christians, it is certain we can go no further than a credible profession till we have a key into the heart; "Him therefore that is weak in the faith, we are commanded to receive, and not to doubtful disputation," Rom. xiv. 1. If we can discover to ourselves and others the first principles of faith, love, holiness,

holiness, and obedience, attended with an hearty desire of resigning ourselves to God in an holy covenant, we may be satisfied of our right to the Lord's table.

It must be admitted, that those words of the apostle which follow our text have been a great stumbling-block to timorous and doubting Christians, (ver. 27.) "Wherefore whosoever shall eat
 " this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord un-
 " worthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood
 " of the Lord." (ver. 29.) "He that eateth and
 " drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh dam-
 " nation to himself, not discerning the Lord's bo-
 " dy." To remove this difficulty, let it be observ-
 ed, that "to eat and drink unworthily," according
 to the apostle's interpretation, means no more than
 not to discern the Lord's body, that is, to receive it
 only as common bread and wine, for the satisfying
 our sensitive appetites, without considering it as a
 sacrament, or figurative representation of the body
 and blood of Christ: he that puts no difference be-
 tween this and common food, and looks no further
 than the bread and wine, does not "discern the
 " Lord's body;" but if, while we are eating and
 drinking, we look up to Jesus by an eye of faith,
 with a thankful remembrance of his sufferings, we
 are worthy communicants: there were, no doubt,
 several in the Corinthian church that ate and drank
 in an indecent manner, some being hungry, and
 others drunk with excess. This was a very great
 crime, a notorious abuse and violation of that holy
 ordinance, which was appointed to be a comme-
 moration of the body and blood of Christ, and not
 a nursery for licentiousness; and what their punish-
 ment will be, the apostle tells us, (ver. 29.) viz.
 that "they eat and drink damnation to themselves."
 The word in the original, *αἰώνιον*, does not signify e-
 ternal

ternal damnation, but such temporal judgments as are mentioned in the very next words, "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

If the punishment of unworthy receiving was eternal damnation, it must then follow, that no real believer could at any time be guilty of this sin; but that this is not the apostle's meaning, is plain to a demonstration from what follows, (ver. 31, 32.) "If we would judge or examine ourselves, we should not be judged or punished (with sickness and weakness, and falling asleep.) But when we are thus punished, we are only chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world," or with everlasting damnation. Let not any therefore be terrified with the sound of this passage of Scripture, or from an apprehension that any peculiar punishment is annexed to our eating and drinking unworthily, more than may be feared from an unbecoming behaviour under any other ordinance of the gospel.

Obs. 3. A special presence of Christ is promised to attend this institution. The Papists affirm, that the elements, after consecration, are transubstantiated or changed into the real body and blood of Christ; because it is said in the text, **THIS IS MY BODY.** But this would destroy the very nature of a sacrament, which is a sign or representation of something, and not the very thing itself: if the bread in the sacrament was no more bread, but real flesh and blood, it would cease to be a memorial: besides, the consecration makes no apparent change in the elements; the bread and wine being the same to our sight, taste, smell, and feeling, as before; and surely our senses must be very proper evidences in cases of this nature, when our blessed Saviour appealed to them as a sufficient proof of his resurrection;

rection; "Handle me and see me," (says he to "his disciples) for a spirit has not flesh and bones "as ye see me have:" but men must shut their eyes, and renounce all their senses, and understanding too, before they can believe that a piece of perishable bread, by the pronouncing a few words by the priest, changes its nature, and in a moment becomes the very flesh, and blood, and bones of Christ, though they can discover no manner of alteration in it; and yet of such importance have the Papists made this article of their faith, that thousands have been burnt for the denial of it.

The Lutherans have refined upon this doctrine; for though they do not maintain the bread in the sacrament to be changed into the very flesh and blood of Christ; they believe his body to be really and substantially present in, and with the sacramental bread, which is called *Consubstantiation*: but then in how many places must this body be at the same time? How must it be multiplied and encreased, to be really and substantially in all places of the world, where the sacrament may be administered? whereas the scripture says expressly, that "the heavens shall contain him "till the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. The presence of Christ therefore in the Lord's Supper can be no more than spiritual. He is not present in body with his church at his table, we cannot see him there after the flesh, and therefore why should we suppose him present after this manner, when the words "This is my body" may as well be understood figuratively: this is a representation, or memorial of my body, such metaphors being very frequent in our Saviour's discourses to his disciples; as when he says, "I am the Vine, "the door of the sheep," &c. When Christ took the bread and said, "This is my body," could he mean that the bread in his hand was really and substantially

substantially his body, when he himself was visible in his full bodily shape at the table? The presence of Christ therefore at the Lord's Supper must have respect only to our faith; he is not present to them that do not discern him by faith, but only to them who behold his hands and feet through the elements, which are a medium or glass to represent his sufferings in the most affecting manner, and are suited to make the deepest and most lasting impressions of his death on our minds.

Thirdly, I come now to consider the obligations that professing Christians are under to comply with this institution. And,

First, It is the express command of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me." Is any precept of the New Testament delivered in plainer or stronger terms? And if children are obliged to obey their parents, surely the disciples of Christ should obey their Lord and Master, who has bought them with his blood, and has therefore a right to their service. Have you given up yourselves to the Lord, and declared your acceptance of him in all his offices, and particularly as your King and Governor, and will you dispute his authority? Are you afraid or ashamed to commemorate the sufferings of the Son of God publicly at his table? Remember then, "Whosoever is ashamed of him before men, of him also will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels," Mark viii. 38. Besides, this is not merely the command of a sovereign, but of one that loves you, and means your good. Have you such another friend in heaven or earth? How much has he done for you already? and what is he now doing at the right hand of God? and will you not so much as remember him? O ingratitude! to slight the dying commands of such a Saviour and Friend!

Secondly, The commemoration of the death of Christ at his table is of great advantage to the worthy communicant : for of all divine institutions, none is so peculiarly adapted to promote our improvement in spiritual graces and comforts as this. To intend our worldly advantage, and take the sacrament only as a qualification for places of civil trust, or preferment in the state, is a manifest perverting the ends and designs of this ordinance, because the benefits designed to be conferred by it are purely spiritual. As,

1. The Lord's Supper is of advantage to confirm our faith. When the disciples told Thomas they had seen the Lord after his resurrection, and he had replied, that except he might see him and handle him, as they had done, he would not believe : our Saviour, in order to establish his faith at the next meeting, calls to him, " Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing." At the Lord's table we discern the Lord's body and blood by faith ; when the bread is broken, we behold his wounded body hanging on the cross, and when the wine is poured into the cup, we see the blood flowing out of his heart, and his very soul made an offering for sin : and though he is presented to our view as in the agonies of death, the humble soul lifts up its eyes with holy devotion, and from the foot of the cross, cries out with Thomas, " My Lord, and my God."

2. The Lord's supper is of advantage to inflame our love : it is a love-feast, and has a tendency to excite this heavenly affection ; when we see him presenting himself at his table, saying, " Behold me ! Behold me !" See how my body was wounded for your sakes ! what it suffered from the hands of men, as well as from the hand of a just
and

and righteous God ! Look into my heart, and see the water and blood flowing out of it ; how I loved you when I consented this should be a fountain opened for sin : here is the bread of life, and the cup of salvation : eat, O friends, and drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved ! Such endearing expressions will awaken and invigorate the affections of every devout communicant, and make him reply with an holy rapture, “ We will remember thy love more than wine ; the upright love thee.”

3. The neglect of this ordinance is represented in scripture as a very great sin, and deserving the severest punishment : though ministers are not to bring professing Christians to the Lord's table by force, yet the expression is very strong, Luke xiv. 23. Compel them to come in, make use of the most powerful arguments, tell them their duty, and represent the anger of the master of the feast against those who excused themselves when he sware in his wrath that none of them should taste of his supper. To live in the neglect of the Lord's table, is to continue in a state of disobedience to the express will of Christ, and in a contempt of his authority, who has preremptorily commanded his disciples to remember him : it is also a sin of ingratitude to our greatest benefactor, who requires no other acknowledgment ; and what the consequence of such a neglect will be, is hard to determine, because we are ignorant of the springs from whence it arises : Allowances must be made for tender spirits ; but the excuses of far the greatest number of Christians are groundless, and even such as will not bear the examination of their own consciences ; for this cause clouds and darkness are upon their souls, deadness and lukewarmness on their affections ; and a manifest declension in the very life and power of religion.

religion. They lose part of that spiritual food provided for the church, and are frequently under awful apprehensions, lest, as they have neglected to remember their Saviour at his table on earth, he should not remember them when they appear at his tribunal.

Fourthly, I proceed now to resolve some enquiries relating to this institution: And,

Q. 1. Since the Lord's supper is to be continued in the church till he come again, it may be enquired how often we shall receive it? **Answer.** In the primitive times it was a part of the service of every Lord's day, as appears from the expression before my text, "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," which implies that this was one end of their coming together. It is further evident from the words of St Luke, Acts xx. 7. Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them. The church was then under persecution, and in a constant expectation of the fiery trial, and had therefore need of a quick and frequent memorial of their Lord's death. In these latter ages, some churches have gone into a contrary extreme, administering the ordinance but twice or three times in a year; but the custom of receiving it once a month is, in my opinion, a proper medium between the two extremes: for as by too frequent receiving we might grow careless in our preparation, so by receiving too seldom, our affections might grow languid, and we might forget our vows before we had an opportunity to renew them.

Q. 2. In what posture are we to receive the Lord's supper? **Answer.** In some foreign churches they receive it standing, and in others sitting round the table; the church of England enjoins her members to take it kneeling, with a declaration that no adoration is intended. It is certain our blessed Master gave it his disciples in a table posture. St

Luke

Luke says, He sat down; and the twelve apostles with him, Luke xxii. 14. St Mark says, As they sat, Jesus took bread, Mark xiv. 18. If our Saviour had not thought this posture reverend enough, he would certainly have forbid it, or appointed another; and therefore, tho' we ought to lay no great stress upon postures, it is best to follow his example.

Q. 3. May the people as well as the minister receive in both kinds? Answer. When the doctrine of transubstantiation first obtained in the church of Rome, the cup was taken from the people, because it was supposed the whole body of Christ, flesh and blood, was contained under the species of bread, and therefore it was sufficient to receive in one kind; but beside the absurdity of the doctrine of transubstantiation already proved, it is contrary to the express words of scripture, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." And again, Matt. xxvi. 27. "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;" and if Christ allowed his disciples to drink, no church on earth has power to forbid it.

Q. 4. May the Lord's supper be administered in private? Ans. This seems not so agreeable to the nature of the institution, which is a communion, though introduced pretty early; and perhaps it may be justifiable in times of persecution, when it cannot with safety be administered in publick; but the practice of carrying the sacrament to the sick, or to persons on their death-bed, when they are going out of the world, looks like making it a *viaticum*, or a passport for a sinner to heaven: it is by this means often administered to persons that have no right to it, and is attended with this very dangerous consequence, that the consciences of men are quieted or laid asleep upon a false foundation.

Q. 5.

Q. 5. Is the Lord's supper a real propitiatory sacrifice for sin? **Ans.** The papists say, that when they present the host, or sacrament, upon the altar, they offer up the true body and blood of Christ again, as a proper atonement for those persons on whose account the mass is celebrated; and therefore priests are constantly employed in saying masses, not only for the living, but the dead. But it ought to be remembered, that the Lord's supper is a sacrament, and not a sacrifice; a memorial of something already accomplished, and not a new atonement or propitiation. This is contrary to the very words of the apostle, Heb. x. 10. 14. who says, that Christ appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and that we are sanctified by the offering up of the body of Jesus once for all. The single sacrifice of Christ without the gates of Jerusalem is a sufficient atonement for the sins of all who accept him for their mediator to the end of the world.

Fifthly, I come to enquire into the ends and uses of this divine institution: and,

1. It was designed to perpetuate the memory of the death of Christ till his second coming. A wonderful event, never to be forgotten by those who hope to reap the benefits of it! The manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and his dying upon the cross for the redemption of mankind, deserves to be solemnized in the most particular manner. For this purpose, the Lord's Supper is appointed as a standing memorial of it both to God and man. When the believing communicant takes the elements into his hands, he may hold them up as a memorial to God, humbly to put him in mind of that sacrifice of his Son with which he has declared himself well pleased: as when God set the rainbow in the clouds after the deluge, it was for a memorial

to himself of the covenant that he had made with Noah, Gen. ix. 16. "I will look upon it (says he) that I may remember the everlasting covenant." It is also designed as a memorial to us of the unparalleled love of our dying Lord. If it be reasonable to preserve the remembrance of a deliverance from popery and slavery, or any temporal calamity, by an annual festival; with what pleasure should we remember our deliverance from hell and eternal damnation? The Lord's Supper is therefore called an Eucharist, or festival, in remembrance of the triumphs of Christ on the cross; and how delightful is the entertainment! When we are meditating upon the victory he has obtained over all our enemies, and the high powers with which he is invested in consequence thereof; this will inspire us with resolution and courage in the Christian warfare: "Fear not, (says our exalted Saviour,) "I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

2. The Lord's Supper is designed as a public testimony of our communion with Christ. "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. x. 16. By eating and drinking at the Lord's table, we are united to Christ, and as it were incorporated into him; he dwells in us, and we in him; we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And as the members of the body are nourished by wholesome food, so the graces of faith, love, joy, peace, and holy courage, are improved and strengthened by this spiritual banquet.

3. It is designed to be a seal of the covenant of grace. "This cup is the New Testament;" that is,

is, a confirmation of it, or according to St Matthew, "This is my blood of the New Testament." The gospel-dispensation is sometimes represented in our language as a covenant, and sometimes as a testament; but it is the same word in the original: if we consider the blood of Christ as a seal of the new covenant; when we drink it at the Lord's table, we declare our acceptance of the covenant upon gospel terms, we oblige ourselves to the several engagements it lays us under, and renew our solemn dedication. If we consider it as a testament, or the last will of our blessed Saviour, we declare our firm belief in the efficacy of it, for the obtaining all those blessings it was shed to procure, and which are promised to those who receive it with a lively faith; in allusion to the apostle's manner of reasoning from the law of Moses, Heb. ix. 15, &c. "Where a testament is, (says he) there must of necessity be the death of the testator. When Moses had spoken every precept to the people according to the law, he took the blood and water, and sprinkled it upon the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined you. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices."

4. Another end of this institution is, to excite our thankfulness; for, as has been observed, the Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast, at which we are to rejoice in memory of the victory the Lord Jesus gained over the powers of darkness, by nailing them to his cross: the combat indeed was sharp, but the victory complete: he not only conquered him that had the power of death, that is the devil, but delivered those who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. We should therefore surround his table with joyful hearts, and our spirits

rits should rejoice in God our Saviour; for if Christians are allowed to glory in any thing, surely in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to them, and they to the world.

5. The Lord's Supper is appointed as a public declaration of our Christian love and communion with the saints. The church of Christ is his body, of which true Christians in all parts of the world are members, how distant soever they may live from each other, or how much soever they differ in lesser things: all who hold the head, and who in the judgment of charity are real members of the mystical body of Christ, are of one family and household, and should therefore receive each other to communion occasionally at the Lord's table, though they may stately prefer different modes and forms of worship; there is but one body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; and there ought to be no schism in that body. Do we all hope to meet in the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven, and shall we refuse to meet at the Lord's table on earth? As there should be no terms of communion or enclosures about the Lord's table, but what Christ himself has made, so when Christians come to this solemnity, they should be in perfect love and charity with all their fellow-Christians: how beautiful and pleasant is it to see a number of saints joining in one communion! eating the same bread, and drinking the same cup; owning each other for fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, and uniting their voices in thanksgivings and praises to him "that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!"

Suffer me now, in the close of this discourse, to persuade you to partake of this heavenly banquet:

"Wisdom has built her house, mingled her wine,
"and furnished her table, she hath also sent her

“ to you, saying, “ Come, eat of my bread, and
“ drink of my wine that I have mingled.” Consider who invites you, it is your Saviour and best friend ; he that has loved you, and given his soul a ransom for you ; he that is now remembering you at the right hand of the throne of God his Father, and from whose lips your final sentence must proceed. Consider what a noble feast he invites you to, “ A feast
“ of fat things, full of marrow, and of wine on the lees well refined ;” it is a spiritual entertainment for the kindling a flame of sacred love and devotion to your Saviour and God ; and the promoting your joy and comfort : consider the society to which you join ; for besides the special presence of Christ to be expected in this ordinance, there are a number of professing believers, who are the excellent ones of the earth, in whom should be all your delight. I must therefore charge it upon you as a duty, as well as excite you to it as a privilege ; give not way to the difficulties and discouragements the devil and your own corrupt inclinations may suggest ; don’t study excuses, nor put off God and your own consciences with unnecessary delays, but resolve immediately to break through all impediments, that you may be found walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. Do you hope for mercy from Christ, when he sits on his throne of judgment ? meet him then, and make your peace with him at his table beforehand ; give up yourselves to the Lord, and to his church, according to the will of God : be not afraid of your unfitness, nor wait for a full assurance of faith beforehand, but come with a sincere and humble desire to remember with thankfulness your dying Saviour, and you will be a welcome guest. Great will be the peace and edification of your minds when you have seen Jesus at his table, the life of religion will re-
vive,

vive, and the favour of God will encompass you as a shield; you'll have a heaven of joy and delight in your spirits, and will be the better prepared for the general assembly of the church of the first-born above, where it will be your everlasting employment, to behold the person of your exalted Redeemer, and to join your voice with those that are round about the throne; the number of whom is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and to sing with them, "Worthy is the
" Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and
" glory, and blessing; for he was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Amen. Hallelujah!

SERMON XXXIX.

Duties relating to the Holy Spirit.

EPHESIANS IV. 30.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed until the day of redemption.

YOU have had an account in some foregoing discourses of various duties relating to our Lord Jesus Christ; and we are now to proceed to such as relate to the Holy Spirit. For this purpose I have chosen these words; and, if he will please to favour the attempt, shall,

I. Enquire what duties are incumbent upon us, relating to the Spirit of God, And,

II. Consider the arguments contained in our text to enforce them.

I. Enquire what duties are incumbent upon us relating to the Spirit of God.

According to the general rule of interpreting negative precepts, the charge not to grieve the Spirit, implies more than is expressed; it carries an obligation to a contrary duty, and that is to be-
have

have in a becoming manner toward him, or to treat him in such a way as is worthy of him, dutiful and well pleasing to him: and what sort of behaviour this is, may be suggested in the following hints.

1. He is to be owned and glorified as a divine person.

We now take it for granted, that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, it having been proved in a former discourse; as such therefore we are to regard him, and to ascribe the glory which is due to him. We are to conceive of him as possessed of all the perfections of the God-head, together with the Father and Son, and yet as distinguished by personal properties and acts from them; as jointly concurring with them in the works of nature and of grace; and as the God, together with them, in whose name we are baptised and blessed. And under such considerations of the Spirit, we are to pay him all religious worship, to adore and reverence his glorious name, to devote ourselves to him, to exalt him in our highest esteem, thanksgivings, and praise, and to invoke him in our prayers. These divine honours go along with his excellencies; they are founded in them, and therefore ought to be acknowledged and ascribed to him, together with the Father and Son, as his due. Hence,

2. We should entertain honourable thoughts of the Spirit of God, with regard to the peculiar part he bears in the work of salvation.

This is a point of light, in which divine revelation abundantly places him. With respect hereunto we are assured that he formed the human nature of Christ; anointed him for his saving office; assisted him in, and carried him through his state of humiliation upon earth, and glorifies him, by taking of his things, and shewing them to us since

he is gone to heaven. This blessed Spirit indited the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, qualifies ministers to preach the gospel, and assists them in it; and by his blessing on these means, he convinces and converts us, enlightens us with knowledge of Christ, renews us according to his image, quickens, counsels, and comforts us, upholds, strengthens and establishes us, forms us for heaven, and preserves us safe to it.

We should therefore believe and admire all these things concerning him. We should be persuaded, that his operations and influences for all the purposes of religion and blessedness are the greatest realities, and not give way to infidel jealousies, or prophane insinuations, as if they were only the fancies of a warm distempered brain, or the delusions of Satan. We should be convinced of the necessity of his gracious operations upon our own souls, that "except we be born of the Spirit, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 5. and that we must be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man," Eph. iii. 16. to enable us to exercise the several graces, and perform the several duties of the Christian life. We should think of his operations as of the highest importance, and think of him as an almighty, holy, and sovereign Agent, in the distribution of his gifts and graces, dividing them severally as he will. And we should be much affected with the love of the Spirit, that he should freely condescend to undertake the applying part of the work of redemption to such sinful creatures as we are; and that, in order hereto, he should make such near approaches to us, should put up so many affronts and provocations, and bear so long with us; that he should wait with so much patience to be gracious to us, and continue to strive with any of us,
till

'till he overcomes our resistances; and that he should make his own way into our hearts, and take possession of such polluted souls as ours, to purify and adorn them, and should not give up his work in them, till he has perfected all that concerns them. Hence,

3. We should be earnest in our desires and prayers for the Spirit, to all the purposes for which we need him.

Without this we can never shew the sincerity of our regards to him and his influences, nor can we warrantably hope to be favoured with them; but God has promised to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," Luke xi. 3. And surely a sense of the excellency, necessity, and importance of this gift, the gracious promises that are made of it, and the freeness of divine love in bestowing it, should engage our humble, believing, and importunate supplications for it. We should pray for the "Communion of the Holy Ghost," 2 Cor. xiii. 1. and the language of our souls should be like that of the spouse, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," Cant. iv. 16. "Come, thou blessed Spirit, like the wind that blows when and where it lists, let thy purifying and refreshing gales breathe upon my soul, that under thy influence every corruption may wither and die, and every grace may revive and flourish within me." We should pray that God would shed the Holy Ghost upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that he would pour his Spirit upon all flesh; that, according to his covenant, he "would pour his Spirit upon our seed, and his blessing upon our offspring," Isa. xlv. 3. and that he would "put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments" and

“and do them,” as he promised to Israel, with this addition, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,” Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 37. We should pray with David, Psal. li. 11, 12. “Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” And, Psal. cxliii. 10. “Thy Spirit is good, lead me,” or as it might be rendered, “let him lead me into the land of uprightness.”

Such is the importance of this blessing of the Spirit, that no other saving benefit can effectually reach us without it, and all others are in a manner wrapp’d up in it: all the effects of God’s special favour and love, and all the merit of the blood of Christ, are communicated to us by it; and all exercises of grace in us, all holy obedience to God and communion with him, all our spiritual life and growth, comfort and safety, all the interests of religion to the glory of God, and our own eternal salvation, depend upon it. For “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; but if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,” Rom. viii. 9, 10. Hence our great High-Priest and Advocate sums up all the benefits of his intercession for his people in this capital blessing, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth,” John xiv. 16.

He is the great Promise of the New Testament, as Christ was of the Old; and just before our Lord’s ascension to heaven, being “assembled together

gether with his disciples, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father," assuring them that they should be "baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days afterwards," Acts i. 4, 5. Accordingly "they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," ver. 14. no doubt, for the accomplishment of this promise, which they were waiting for; and "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Chap. ii. 1, 4. God now fulfilled his promise and their prayer: The Spirit came upon this praying assembly, as he before had upon our praying Saviour; for "whilst he was praying the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon him," Luke iii. 21, 22.

Praying is God's ordinance, for bringing down his Spirit upon us: and his promise of sending him is not to supersede, but quicken the prayer of faith: prayer honours God, and he will honour prayer: his Spirit comes upon praying souls, and comes in answer to prayer: hence the apostle prayed for the Ephesians, that "God would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," &c. Eph. i. 17, 18. Whatever we want the Holy Spirit for, whether for his gifts and graces, his light and quickenings, his aids and assistances, his purifications and consolations, we should shew our high value and concern for them, by following hard after the Lord in publick and private addresses to the throne of grace, that we may be favoured with them. Hence,

4. It is our duty to make use of all the means of grace which God has appointed and owns for vouchsafements of his Spirit.

We have already heard that prayer is one of those means; but this is not the only means of obtaining this blessing. Sometimes the Holy Spirit breathes upon pious meditations, "My heart," says David, "was hot within me; whilst I was musing, the fire burned," Psal. xxxix. 3. At other times he strikes in with religious discourse, as our Lord did with that of his disciples in their way to Emmaus, and made "their hearts burn within them," Luke xxiv. 13—32. But the more usual way, in which the Spirit of God meets his people, is in reading and hearing of his word, and in celebrations of the Lord's supper. The gospel is styled the "ministration of the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 8. because he accompanies it with his power, and works effectually by it in the various ways of its administration. He often blesses the reading of his word, as he did to the eunuch, Acts viii. 28—37. His reading it gave occasion for the Spirit sending Philip to preach unto him Jesus; which shews that we may hope for his blessing upon our searching the scriptures, and reading them alone: but he made his work effectual on the eunuch's heart by Philip's preaching, which shews that we must not take up with reading, to the neglect of hearing the word, or think that we may as well stay at home and read, as go out to hear.

As preaching is God's ordinance, so it is his most useful way of conveying the Spirit to us: while Peter was preaching to the people, that "Christ is ordained of God to be Judge of quick and dead; and that to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believes in him,"

“him, shall receive remission of sins, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word,” Acts x. 42, 43, 44. And when the men of Cyprus and Cyrene spake to the Grecians, “preaching the Lord Jesus, the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord,” Chap. xi. 20, 21. According to the most ordinary dispensations of divine grace, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Rom. x. 17. The gospel is the word of faith, which we preach, and which the Holy Ghost honours with his presence, to make it effectual; hence is that appeal of the apostle to the Galatians, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Gal. iii. 2. And when by hearing we have received the Spirit, we may hope to receive him yet more abundantly in the Lord’s supper; that is a sealing ordinance, and there the Spirit uses to seal believers to the day of redemption.

If therefore we would have the Spirit, and would honour him, we should be found in his way, where he is wont to come and move upon many hearts, to convince, convert, and build them up in faith, comfort, and holiness, to melt and soften cold and hard hearts, to quicken them that were dead in trespasses and sins, to strengthen the weak, to revive the disconsolate, to heal the broken in heart, to mortify our corruptions, to assist us in every duty, to silence our doubts and fears, and to raise our hopes and joys. Hence,

5. We should seriously attend to all the Spirit’s motions upon our souls.

He often draws nigh to us in a way of mercy, and gives us some secret hints and touches, to awaken, convince, and counsel us; to reprove us for sin, or to excite us to that which is good:

there are few, if any, that sit under the gospel, with whom the Spirit of God does not some time or other strive, as he did with the old world, in the ministry of Noah, that preacher of righteousness. Sometimes in their hearing the word, or in their after-reflections upon it; sometimes when they are in divers sorts of company, good or bad, or when they are alone in their retirements, or upon their beds, and sometimes under awful and afflictive providences, the blessed Spirit suggests a seasonable thought of gracious tendency, and impresses it upon the conscience: he argues and debates with the soul, and follows it from time to time, with awakenings and alarms, with checks and excitations, with cautions and encouragements, to shew it its danger and its relief, the vanity of this world, and the necessity of an interest in Christ and salvation, and to turn it from sin to God through a Redeemer. He has many a struggle with the soul to bring it off from every false rest, and every false way, to put it upon flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before it, to restrain it from this and the other iniquity, to stir it up to this and the other duty, and to lead it into consolations which are not small.

It highly concerns us to pay a sacred regard to all his holy motions upon our hearts: we should watch for them with expectation and hope, that he will one time or other vouchsafe them to us in his ways, and with a religious care, that when he graciously affords them, we may not be insensible of them, or inattentive to them, or indisposed to embrace and improve them: we should take heed of "grieving and quenching the Spirit," 1 Thess. v. 19. or of "resisting the Holy Ghost," Acts vii. 51. by stifling his motions, shutting our eyes against his light,

light, hardening our hearts against his reproof, and turning aside from it. We should see to it, that we don't put him off to another time, nor fill our minds with the amusements, the pleasures, or the business of life, to deface the good impressions he makes upon us. But it ought to be our serious and conscientious concern, to observe who it is that is dealing with us, and what is its tendency, that we may cherish every good motion, bid it welcome, entertain it with gladness of heart, and with hope that the blessed Spirit is come to work effectually in us, and to shew us some distinguishing tokens of his love: and we should take the advantage of this gale of the Spirit, to set forward in our way heavenward. O how should our souls cry out with the spouse, "Draw me, we will run after thee!" Cant. i. 4. And with "Ephraim, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned," Jer. xxxi. 18. or with the Psalmist, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart! Psal. cxix. 32. Hence,

6. We should live under his influence, in such a manner as is pleasing to him, and answerable to his holy design upon us.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," Gal. v. 25. If the Spirit of Christ has infused a principle of spiritual life into our souls, and dwells in us, we are thereby fitted to walk in a spiritual and holy manner, and are under the highest, and the most endearing obligations so to do. If we don't attend to this duty, who should, or who can? For "they that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. It should be our desire and endeavour to act up to the principles of a supernatural life, and to be ever walking in the Spirit, putting ourselves in the way of his influence, and walking in his light and strength.

strength, according to his dictates, as may be most pleasing to him, and most suitable to the holy nature, tendency, and design of his gracious operations upon us.

What this walking in the Spirit is, the apostle describes at large, Gal. v. 16, 23.; and the sum of all lies in abstaining from the works of the flesh, and abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, which are contrary to one another: and "they that are Christ's," and partakers of his Spirit, "have crucified the flesh" "with its affections and lusts, (ver. 24.)" They are obliged to it, and are heartily engaged in it; and tho' they are not already perfect, but the best of them still have remainders of flesh or corruption, to their daily grief; yet they are to be continually maintaining their war against it, that "they, thro' the Spirit, may mortify the deeds of the body, and live," Rom. viii. 13.; and that "sin may not reign in their" "mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts" "thereof," chap. vi. 12. They do and must look upon all sin as highly offensive to the Holy Spirit, and as such set themselves against it, that they may not grieve him. Accordingly in our context, the apostle particularly instances in several works of the flesh, which must be watched against and subdued, as ever we would not grieve the Holy Spirit of God; such as lying, stealing, wrathful and intemperate passions, loose and filthy communications, and the like, Ephes. iv. 20---31. And on the other hand, he instances in several duties, such as mutual forgiveness, kindness, compassion, and love, which must be attended to, as ever we would please him, ver. 32. and chap. v. 1, 2.

We should let the Spirit have the glory of his work in us; should be thankful to him for it, and make it evident to all about us, that his grace bestowed upon us is not in vain. We should shew that

that we love him, and are obedient to him; that we live under the government and dominion of his grace, and are devoted to his will, that we fear to offend him, and take pleasure in every thing that is pleasing to him; that we are willing and desirous to be and do whatsoever he would have us, and are going on in his ways with a dependance upon him, with gratitude and praise to him, with aids and assistances from him, with cheerful surrenders of ourselves to his conduct, and with joyful hopes that he will enable us to hold on our way, and to grow stronger and stronger, and that he will continue to dwell in us, and will quicken our mortal bodies to a glorious immortality at the last day. In this manner we are to "sow to the Spirit, that of the Spirit we may reap life everlasting,"

Gal. vi. 8. Our whole life should be spiritual and holy; honourable to God, and useful to others, under the Spirit's influence, as the way to obtain still more of it, and to bring forth such further fruits of the Spirit as shall issue in everlasting life.

7. It should heartily grieve us that the Spirit of God is so much grieved.

Which of us must not own, to our shame, that we have been too often cool and indifferent toward him, insensible of our great need of him, inattentive to his kind motions, froward and perverse under them, and disobedient to many of his holy dictates! How should we mourn over this, and be humbled for it! and O how should we be troubled at heart to think that the infinitely good and glorious Spirit of God is so neglected, and ill treated, as he is in our age; that his divine person is degraded and blasphemed by some, and his divine operations are opposed and derided by others; that so much despite is done to the Spirit of grace, and that one way or other he has been so highly grieved, vexed, and rebelled

rebelled against ! Do we not already feel, and may we not still further fear the sad effects of these provocations of the Spirit, in his withdrawals from our solemn assemblies, and from our own souls ! And shall not we be troubled for all this, and lament after him ! Surely, if we love and honour him, if we value his glory and his presence with us, we cannot but be affected with the deepest sorrow of heart at the many grievous and offensive things, which are found with us against him. This brings us to,

II. Consider the several arguments contained in our text “to enforce these duties.” And this is all the application our time will allow us to make of the subject. Let us then observe,

1. The authority of God demands these duties to be paid to his Spirit.

It is God, by the apostle, that charges us in our text, not to grieve his Spirit, but to carry it well toward him ; for “all scripture is given by inspiration of God,” 2 Tim. iii. 16. So that to disregard the injunction in our text, is to bid God himself defiance ; it is to despise his authority, and to cast his command behind our backs, and such a command too, as affects all his other commands, and is designed to promote our observation of them. We cannot break this without breaking others with it ; and we may as well think ourselves at liberty to dispense with all the commands of the moral law, as to dispense with this ; especially since ’tis only by the aid of the Holy Spirit that we can duly observe any of them. Let conscience therefore fall under a sense of God’s authority, to oblige us to a due behaviour towards his Spirit.

2. He, to whom these duties have a special reference, is the Spirit of God.

It is not a man like thyself, it is not thine equal, not any created Spirit, but one infinitely above thee, and above all angels and archangels; it is the uncreated Spirit of God, who is himself God. And canst thou dare to offend and provoke, or to behave undutifully toward him? What! wilt thou not reverence God the Spirit, who is intimately near and present to thee, and is dealing in an immediate manner with thee; yea, who comes to take up a special abode in thee, who has thee perpetually under his eye, and dwells in thee as in his temple, if thou art a true believer? Wilt thou offend and affront him, in his sight and presence, and in his own house and home? Wilt thou not let him rest and dwell at peace with thee there? How criminal and aggravated a conduct is this? Yea, every unworthy behaviour toward the Spirit is an attempt to shut thyself out from mercy; it is sinning not only against him, but likewise against the Father and the Son, from whom he comes to work upon thee; and it is sinning against all the grace of the Father, and all the merit of the Son, neither of which can be effectual to thy salvation, without the application of the Spirit; and the height of sinning against him and his operations, is the only unpardonable sin.

3. He is the Holy Spirit.

His nature and will, ways and works are holy, all the tendencies of his operations, are to holiness, and all their effects, where they prevail, are holiness; there is no iniquity in him or them. With what reverence and caution then shouldest thou behave in the sight and presence of such an Holy One? How willing shouldest thou be to be made holy by him, and to behave in a holy manner toward him, and under his eye? The more holy

any one is, the more offended and grieved he must be, (like Lot in Sodom) at the abominations of others, and especially of those whom he is most intimately concerned in, and has most to do with.

How much more, speaking after the manner of men, must the Holy Spirit, who is holiness itself, be offended and grieved at our sinful behaviour before him, and in opposition to him, and that in those very works too, whereby he comes to make us holy, and in those very souls which he has taken possession of for himself to dwell in! To disregard and oppose him herein, is not only to offend him, by acting contrary to his nature and will, but 'tis likewise to affront him, by doing what in us lies to defeat his special design in his peculiar work, which he most of all delights in. O how hateful and urging must this be to him! Think you hear him saying to you in this case, as God said to Israel, with regard to their idolatries, "O do not this abominable thing, that I hate," Jer. xlii. 4.

194. The nature and design of the Spirit's work is to seal us.

This is what he aims at, and more or less effects in all his special gracious operations. He therein seals every true believer, by impressing his holy image upon them, and by securing them against the day of redemption; and he furthermore seals many of them by assuring evidences, that the day of redemption shall be a glorious day to them. Doth he come to shew this signal kindness to any of you; and has he already shewn it to some of you? Hath he renewed and sanctified your natures? Hath he brought Christ into your hearts as your hope of glory, and witnessed with your spirits that you are the children of God?

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Hath he hitherto preserved you and engaged to preserve you still, even to the day of compleat redemption? and shalt thou not carry it well to such a kind indulging friend as this? Wilt thou resist, offend, and affront him, and set thyself against him, whilst he is freely employing himself in such gracious, tender, and important favours to thee? Is this thy kindness to thy friend, the best of all friends, to make such unworthy returns for all his care and love? How vile, how black is the disingenuity and ingratitude of all this!

“We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,” Rom. viii. 12, 13. We are under no obligations to sensual desires, and can reap no advantage by gratifying them: We never got any thing by serving them, but trouble, mischief, and shame; and can have no expectations from that service, but death and ruin: “But we are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit;” he is infinitely worthy of all our attention and regards; we have met with many a kind office from him; he has helped us out of many difficulties, troubles, fears, and dangers; has wrought all our works in us and for us, and is carrying us on in the way to eternal blessedness: We should therefore be entreated by the love of the Spirit to carry it well toward him, as the apostle argued with the Romans in another case, Rom. xv. 30.

5. This sealing work of the Spirit is unto the day of redemption.

All his sealings have a respect to that day: they aim at it, and shall surely issue in it; and then the bodies of believers shall be raised to a glorious immortality, and all sin, with all its sorrow-

ful effects, shall cease for ever. The Spirit in his sealing work is giving you the sweetest and surest earnest of this blessed day, is forming you for it, and working you up to it, that you may more and more long, and breathe, and pant after it, and be more and more fitted to enjoy it. And is not all this happy and delightful work for you? would you do any thing to put a check upon it? Is not the end which the Holy Spirit aims at herein worth your aiming at too? And is not he infinitely worthy of your highest love, honour, and obedience, whilst he is conducting you onward to all the glory of this day? O! never talk of bearing a part in its joyful triumphs, without behaving toward the Spirit like one that is willing to be formed for its holiness, as well as for delights. To conclude,

6. If we don't behave dutifully toward the Spirit, he will certainly be grieved.

The apostle supposes this in his caution not to grieve him: though, being God, he has our passions, and cannot be properly grieved by us; yet he will take it ill at our hands, and carry it toward us like one that is grieved, if we behave undutifully toward him. And oh! who knows the dreadful effects of disregarding, stifling, opposing and abusing the Spirit and his operations? It has been the ruin of thousands, who seemed once to set out fair for heaven; they have had some illuminations and convictions, but unbelief and sensual affections have strove and worked against them, until they have stifled and smothered them, and all has come to nothing, as is represented in the parable of the stony and thorny ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20, 21, 22. How many are there, who provoke the Spirit of the Lord, and cast contempt upon him, by their desperate opposition to him
and

and his work, till at length, instead of sealing them to the day of redemption, he strives with them no more, but gives them up to the way of their own chusing! and so being left to themselves, they are sealed by a judicial hardness to eternal destruction, past all help or hope of recovery, as is said of them that “sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, and do despite to the Spirit of grace.” Heb. x. 26, 30.

And as to God’s own people, his chosen and called, though the Spirit of the Lord works in them with such energy, resolution, and love, as not to be baffled or defeated in his grand design of mercy toward them, nor to be wearied out and ejected from their hearts, when once he has taken possession of them for himself; yet it is of very dangerous consequence even to them to grieve him: it will check and hinder much of his sealing work in their souls; he will carry it shy and at a distance from them; corruptions will gain ground, and his sanctifying work will make but little progress in their hearts and lives; and instead of his sealing their evidences of interest in Christ and salvation through him, and shedding abroad God’s love in their hearts, thick darkness may cover and distress their minds, and they may be left to draw desperate conclusions against themselves, as if they were the abandoned of the Lord, and marked out for everlasting destruction. And when the blessed Spirit is thus withdrawn in his grief from them, they may for a while seek and cry after him with mournful hearts, and not find him, though at length he will be found again by the soul that seeks him. And besides all this, none know what dreadful temporal judgments, public or private, may be brought upon them as a rebuke for grieving him. May we justly expect such terrible effects as these of misbehaving toward

ward this great and holy One? Let us then see to it, that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

SERMON

[231]

SERMON XL.

Sobriety, and the opposite Sins.

TITUS II. II, 12.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

THE appetites, which our infinitely kind and wise Creator has planted in our animal nature, would subserve very useful purposes, if well regulated; but in our present degenerate state they are the springs of a great deal of sin and mischief. It is a difficult and very important work to restrain and govern these aright: if what shall be now said is made effectual for your assistance herein, it will answer a most valuable end; and praise should be given to the God of all grace.

Sensual inclinations and desires are doubtless intended by worldly lusts in the text: they bear this character, because the world of mankind is generally governed by them: they reign over all ranks and orders of men: those who "had their conver-

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"sation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh," are said by the apostle to have "walked according to the course of this world," Eph. ii. 2, 3.

Again, they may be stiled worldly lusts, upon the account of their objects, the things of this world: this is the only place that affords proper gratifications for them. Those who yield up themselves to their dominion, take their portion in this world. A sorry portion indeed! it will certainly fail them. The gospel which is meant by the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teacheth all men, that denying these, together with ungodliness, "they should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." These words are expressive of our duties to ourselves, our neighbours, and to God. It is the first of these I am now to consider.

The gospel teacheth us our duty more immediately in respect to ourselves, "that denying worldly lusts, we should live soberly." In discoursing upon this subject, I shall,

First, Set before you the instructions contained in the gospel relating to the denial of worldly lusts in general, so as to live soberly. Then,

Secondly, Proceed to the consideration of the lessons it gives concerning the denial of those lusts in particular that are opposite to temperance and chastity, which are included in sobriety.

First, Let me represent to you the instructions contained in the gospel, relating to the denial of worldly lusts in general, so as to live soberly. And here it will be proper to enquire,

1. When persons may be said to deny worldly lusts, so as to live soberly.

2. In

2. In what manner, and by what methods this is taught in the gospel.

1. When may persons be said to deny worldly lusts, so as to live soberly?

(1.) When they are watchful, lest they are carried by the propensities of the flesh to do any thing that God has forbidden. Sobriety cannot be now practised by the children of men without vigilance. The apostle therefore joins these in his exhortation, 1 Peter v. 8. "Be sober, be vigilant." We have a busy adversary, who seeks our destruction; but he can do us no hurt, without the concurrence of our own lusts; they are our most dangerous enemies; it will be great folly in us to be negligent of these; we should always keep a jealous eye upon them. Then is a man effectually "tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed," James i. 14. The solicitations of the flesh to turn aside from the path of duty, or into the way of sin, should be vigorously resisted: Whatever profit or pleasure it may promise upon a compliance, it ought not to be hearkened to, but repulsed with such an answer as this, "How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" Persons should endeavour to maintain in their minds an holy fear of God: This will be a most powerful check upon their worldly lusts; it will make them careful not to be seduced by them to the commission of those things which are dishonourable to his name, and offensive in his sight. But,

(2.) It is not enough that persons take care to keep their lusts from breaking out into enormous practices; they should also endeavour to "weaken their power, and to suppress their inward workings." When these rage within, they commonly bear down all opposition, and vent

themselves in outward acts of wickedness : but it is possible for men to put on an appearance of sobriety, and to preserve a fair outside, whilst the vilest affections reign in their hearts. This was the case of the Pharisees, who “ appeared righteous to men, but within were full of iniquity ;” whom our Saviour for this reason compares to whited sepulchres. Matt. xxiii. 27, 28. Would we live soberly as the gospel teacheth us ? then we must deny worldly lusts : we must disallow their secret emotions, and set ourselves to quell them : we must “ crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.” This is our duty ; and it is our character, if we are true Christians, that we have crucified these, Gal. v. 24.

We should in a particular manner exert ourselves to subdue those corrupt dispositions, which have a very great advantage over us, by the means of our natural temper ; or of our circumstances in life : The iniquities to which there is a strong bias in our constitution, or to the commission of which we are frequently tempted, are the sins that do easily beset us, which we are particularly required to lay aside. Heb. xii. 1. The levelling of our endeavours in a special manner to beat down these lusts, and our getting the mastery over them, will greatly evidence our sincerity. Psal. xviii. 23. “ I was upright before him,” saith David, “ and I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

3. When persons chief concern is about another world, they may be said to deny worldly lusts so as to live soberly. Those who behave themselves in a manner becoming the followers of Christ, who conform to his doctrine and example, who put him on, as it is expressed, Rom. xiii. 14. do not “ make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” 'Tis not the main business of their lives

lives to provide for the flesh, and they are far from designing to pamper its lusts with the fruit of their labours. It is not their greatest care what to eat, or what to drink, or wherewith they shall be cloathed; how it shall fare with them in time: They are principally concerned for the eternal state of their souls: They "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness:" their treasure is in heaven: their affections are set on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. It is said, that those who are after the flesh, who are in a carnal state, do mind the things of the flesh; these take up their thoughts, and engage their most eager pursuits; 'tis their greatest solicitude to obtain and secure things that are grateful to the flesh; But they that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5. They prefer their immortal souls to their perishing bodies. What is beneficial to their spirits is in their account much more desirable than those objects, which are entertaining to fleshly appetites; their salvation they esteem to be one thing needful; this they work out with fear and trembling, with the most serious thoughtfulness, lest they should fall short of heaven. Those enjoyments of sense, which are hurtful to their souls, which would have an ill influence upon their future eternal state, they abandon. 'Tis a truly sober conduct, and very becoming the gospel, to keep another world much in view, and to sacrifice all worldly lusts to the concerns of it; to pour contempt upon the temporary pleasures of sin, as utterly unworthy to stand in competition with the endless and inconceivable joys of heaven.

(4.) Persons deny worldly lusts so as to live soberly, when they abstain from sensible gratifications,

tions, in themselves lawful, which have been, and are still likely to be the occasions of sin to them. This, I think, is intended by our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 8. "If thine hand, or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee."

It is as if he had said, Whatever is the occasion of thy falling into sin, which is the worst of evils, and will do thee the greatest mischief, renounce, though it should be in some respects useful and dear to thee as an hand, or a foot. We cannot be too much upon our guard against sin; those things that lead to it should be avoided as much as possible. Therefore it will not be prudent to go to the utmost bounds of lawfulness in compliances with the inclination of the body; for we may then be easily drawn one step further, and so transgress. His situation is dangerous, who walks very near a precipice; a little matter may throw him down.

We should not think it hard and unreasonable, to deny ourselves sometimes as to those things, which are pleasing to the senses, though they are not prohibited by God, and we see no bad effects that may immediately attend the use of them. This practice will promote a habit of self-denial, and make it more easy to controul our appetites, so as to prevent our being hurried by them to sinful and mischievous excesses.

2. Let us enquire, in what manner, and by what methods the gospel teacheth us, that denying worldly lusts, we should live soberly.

1. The gospel sets our duty in this matter before us, in a very clear and convincing light. Our Lord and Saviour requires his disciples in the most express terms to deny themselves. This he frequently inculcates upon them, as a lesson of the greatest importance. So far was he from dispensing

dispensing with sensual indulgences, that he condemned all inordinate desires of the flesh: The law was rescued by him from the corrupt glosses of the Jewish scribes, who made the violations of it to consist wholly in outward acts of sin. Matt. v. How did the apostles of Christ set themselves to turn men from worldly lusts? With what warmth did they beseech them to abstain from these; to "present their bodies a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice unto God; and not to be conformed to this world; but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind?" Rom. xii. 1, 2. How often does this command occur in their writings, Be sober! The apostle Paul, speaking of the blind and ignorant Gentiles, who "gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," addresses himself thus to the converted Ephesians, chap. iv. 20, 21, 22, 23. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so it be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Another apostle, requiring Christians to be sober, adds, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." 1 Peter i. 13, 14. Those practices to which worldly lusts dispose men, are stiled works of darkness, Rom. xiii. 12, 13. They very ill become those who enjoy the light of the gospel. This discovers with great clearness their obligation to behave themselves with sobriety: so that they cannot give the reins to their fleshly appetites, and submit to their dominion, without acting contrary to the convictions of their own minds. Hence the apostle

apostle says, 1 Theff. v. 8. " Let us, who are of
" the day, be sober."

2. The gospel enforces this duty upon us by the strongest arguments and motives.

What can have a greater force to move us to deny worldly lusts, than the consideration of Christ's giving himself to deliver us from them? Gal. i. 4. " Who gave himself for our sins, that he
" might deliver us from the present evil world;" from its wicked lusts; not only from the punishment they deserve, but from their reigning power. We are told in the next verse but one to my text, that he " gave himself for us, to redeem us from
" all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Can any thing be a clearer evidence of the malignity of worldly lusts, and of the importance of a deliverance from them, than God's own Son shedding his blood to accomplish this? Is it not highly reasonable we should deny these, seeing he was at such expence to free us from them? When those who have heard the joyful sound of the gospel yield up themselves to the conduct of their carnal inclinations, they act as if they designed to defeat one of the great ends of our Saviour's crucifixion: the apostle pronounces such as made it their business to gratify their appetites, " enemies of the cross of Christ;" and the mention of such vile ingratitude drew tears from his eyes, Phil. iii. 18, 19. " Many walk, of
" whom I have told you often, and now tell you
" even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross
" of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is
" their belly, whose glory is their shame; who mind
" earthly things." Do our lusts militate against the dear Redeemer, to whom we are obliged beyond all expressions? Surely his love should constrain us to oppose them with the utmost vigour.

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The glorious privileges, which the gospel promises, should excite believers to the denial of worldly lusts. It is a disparagement to our rational nature, to submit to their tyranny. God has given us an understanding, which is our honour; and this was designed to govern our appetites: but when they are suffered to rule over us, our behaviour is very unworthy the character of rational creatures; we hereby sink ourselves into a level with the beasts. How unbecoming Christians is it then, to walk after the flesh! They are dignified with very high privileges. God has promised them his special presence: he hath said, that he "would dwell in them," be their God and Father; and that they should be "his people, his sons, and his daughters," who is almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. Should not they, who are thus honoured, disdain a subjection to their brutal lusts? How would they be hereby debased! "Having therefore," saith the apostle, in the first verse of the following chapter, "these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The sad consequences of indulging worldly lusts, represented in a lively manner by the gospel, should deter men from it. This is very hurtful to societies. The disturbances and divisions, whereby they are torn to pieces, take their rise from hence. James iv. 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" But their prevalence will do the greatest mischief to our own souls. The apostle therefore entreats Christians in the most affectionate terms not to give way to them. 1 Pet. ii. 11. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." They war against
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our better and immortal part: if we do not abstain from them, they will rob our souls of their purity, dignity, and peace; they will defile, enslave, and distress them. The soul being far more excellent than the flesh, the pleasures of the former are proportionably better than those of the latter. The mortification therefore of our fleshly appetites, than which nothing can be more reasonable, must yield much more true delight than a compliance with their inordinate cravings, which leaves a dreadful sting behind it: and if they gain the ascendancy, they will bring utter ruin upon the soul, Rom. viii. 13. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: ye shall be for ever miserable:" this, without doubt, is the meaning of the expression here. Surely we are not debtors to the flesh, that we should live after the flesh, to the destruction of our souls. A prevailing sensuality of temper is inconsistent with the salvation which the gospel proposes. How can he, whose soul is immersed in flesh, who can relish no pleasure but that which is carnal, be happy in the enjoyment of God, who is an infinitely holy Spirit? Nay, we may reasonably suppose, that his unmortified lusts, meeting with nothing in the other world to feed upon that is agreeable to them, will turn inward, and like so many vipers prey upon his own soul. And shall we make a difficulty of denying the lusts of the flesh, when the consequences of indulging them are so terrible?

It is promised in the gospel, that "if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live," Rom. viii. 13. that is, we shall be for ever happy. Is it not the greatest madness, to prefer poor low gratifications, which endure but for a season, to never-ceasing felicity? Those things which now please our senses, shall ere long perish: this is
a very

a very weaning consideration. The apostle makes use of it to press sobriety, and all holy conversation, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober," 2 Epist. chap. iii. ver. 11. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" So that the gospel enforces its exhortations to a sober life by the strongest arguments and motives.

3. The gospel teacheth us our duty in this respect, by setting before us the most amiable examples of the denial of worldly lusts. That of our Saviour, to be sure, deserves the pre-eminence. What a noble pattern of self-denial, and of a contempt of this world, are we presented with in the history of his life! Though he was Lord of all, he submitted to such strait circumstances here on earth, as required relief from his followers; we read that some of them "ministered to him of their substance," Luke viii. 3. So far was he from affecting the pomp and delicacies of life, that he speaks of his condition as very destitute. Matt. viii. 20. "Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." When his disciples thought he neglected himself, and prayed him, saying, "Master, eat:" he made them this answer, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work," John iv. 31. 34. What could be more false and malicious, than his being charged by his enemies, as "a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber!"

How contrary was the behaviour of our Lord's apostles to worldly lusts! What self-denial did they practise! what hardships did they undergo in his service! They were "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst,

“ in fastings often, in cold and nakedness,” 2 Cor. xi. 27. Nothing could be more opposite to fleshly lusts, than such a way of living. The apostle Paul informs us, that he took great pains to subdue these in himself, 1 Cor. ix. 27. “ I keep
 “ under my body, and bring it into subjection;
 “ lest that by any means, when I have preached
 “ salvation unto others, I myself should be a cast-
 “ away.” It will be the greatest absurdity in us, to profess to follow Christ and his apostles, while we are obedient to worldly lusts.

4. The gospel teacheth us to live soberly, by proposing to us sufficient aid for that purpose. The lusts of the flesh, especially in case they have been accustomed to rule for any length of time, are very headstrong. The temptations wherewith we are surrounded give them a great advantage over us, and sin has woefully infeeblled the powers of our minds. We are said to be without strength, Rom. v. 6. So that we might justly be discouraged from attempting a conquest of our carnal corrupt affections, if the gospel did not direct us to an almighty Helper. This acquaints us, that “ grace came by the Lord Jesus Christ,” John i. 17. that his grace is sufficient for us, and that his “ strength is made perfect in weakness,” 2 Cor. xii. 9. Nor is he backward to help those under their infirmities who apply to him by faith and prayer, as appears from the foregoing verses. The gospel is stiled the “ ministration of the Spirit,” 2 Cor. iii. 8. He can create us anew, sanctify us throughout; and he is promised “ to them that ask him,” Luke xi. 13. We are hereby taught to “ mortify
 “ the deeds of the body, through the Spirit,” in a dependence upon him, Rom. viii. 13. and to encourage us hereto, we have a gracious promise, that if we walk in the Spirit, comply with his motions,
 follow

follow his dictates, we shall not "fulfil the lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 16. And shall we be so disingenuous, so insensible of our own interest, as to slight and refuse his kind assistance! Does the grace of God tender us salvation from worldly lusts, which are our worst adversaries? Surely it becomes us to accept of it with all thankfulness; and to deny these with the utmost abhorrence.

Having shewed how the gospel teacheth us, that, denying worldly lusts in general, we should live soberly: I proceed,

Secondly, To the consideration of the lessons it gives concerning the denial of those lusts in particular, that are opposite to temperance and chastity, which are included in sobriety,

1. The gospel teacheth us in a particular manner, that we should live temperately, and avoid whatever is contrary hereto.

Our natural spirits and strength are soon exhausted, they need frequent recruits; and God, the bountiful creator, has made provision for the nourishment of our feeble nature: and that we might not neglect this, he hath both given us appetites to our food, and annexed pleasure to those actions of eating and drinking, which are necessary to the support of life. But it behoves us to be upon our guard, lest we be enticed, by the hopes of pleasure, to eat and drink to excess. We must not make it the main study and business of our lives to gratify our palates; but to improve the strength and refreshment we derive from the good creatures of God, to the purposes for which he bestows them. The great design of meat and drink, is to render us capable of attending to the duties of life, and of religion: this should direct us in their use, both as to the quantity and the kind of them, we ought to take. We should check our appetites, when

they crave that which is likely to disturb our reason, or to disorder our bodies, be it in a greater or less degree. This is temperance; and it is taught us by the gospel. "Take heed," says our Saviour, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness," Luke xxi. 34. When an account is given of a very corrupt set of men, who were a scandal to the Christian name, this is inserted in their character, that they "fed themselves without fear," Jude, ver. 12. We should be cautious, especially if we are given to appetite, or beset with temptations, lest we exceed in the use of sensible enjoyments. The apostle requires us to give all diligence to add temperance to our faith and knowledge. This is highly becoming the gospel, as will appear, if we consider,

1. The rich entertainment that is herein provided for our souls. The blessings of the covenant of grace are compared to a feast in the scripture. Such as have a true relish of these, may derive from them joy unspeakable; and yet this is but a foretaste of that unmixed and incessant joy, which they are hereby encouraged to expect in heaven. Why should we be fond of the mean delights of sense, who have the nobler consolations of the Spirit? Eph. v. 18, 19. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." All that the heathen moralists have written, in order to dissuade men from intemperance, appears weak and languid, if compared with what we read in the 1 Cor. vi. 13. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." Can any thing be more unreasonable, than our being so taken up with perishing things, as to neglect "the meat which endureth to life everlasting?"

2. The

2. The difficult and important services, to which we are called by the gospel, make temperance very necessary. The work of a Christian is represented in the sacred writings, by those things which require the greatest watchfulness, and exertion of strength, as running a race, fighting and wrestling. And the apostle says, that "every man who striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things," 1 Cor. ix. 25. He abstains from what ever may unfit him for the contest. Should not we then, who wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, that are ready to improve all advantages against us, who contend for an incorruptible crown, observe the strict rules of abstinence! For an indulgence of fleshly appetites takes away the heart, stupifies the mind, and exposes us to the most dangerous attacks of our adversaries. The senseless condition to which men are hereby reduced, so as to run themselves into the most apparent dangers, is described in a very lively manner by the wise man, Prov. xxiii. 34, 35, "Thou shalt be as he that lieth in the midst of the sea; or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have beaten me, shalt thou say, and I felt it not."

The scripture frequently exhorts us to be ready for the coming of Christ, which will be an event of the greatest consequence. Should we not then, according to our Lord's admonition, Luke xxi. 34. "Take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon us unawares?" It will be a day of woeful surprise to us, if it overtakes us unprepared; which will be our case, if our souls are besotted with luxury. Hear the sad fate of him who shall "say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming," and is thereby embolden-

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ed to "eat and drink with the drunken," Matt. xxiv. 50, 51. "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He shall pay dear for all his jollity and mirth.

2dly, The gospel teacheth us to live chaste, and to abstain from whatever is contrary hereto. A modest, chaste temper, and behaviour, we find sometimes expressed by *purity* in the scripture: and the opposite lust is emphatically stiled *uncleannefs*. The apostle recommends to our observance, "the things that are pure," Phil. iv. 8. He forbids chambering and wantonness, as well as rioting and drunkenness, Rom. xiii. 13. "Fornication, and all uncleanness, should not be once named among Christians, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." They should detest lewd discourses, obscene gestures, immodest apparel, and whatever has a tendency to awaken impure desires, which will deprive them of the greatest happiness, if they gain the dominion: for this is a certain truth, "That no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God," Eph. v. 3, 4, 5.

Our Lord does not only declare him guilty of adultery, who commits the outward gross act of that sin, but him that does not take care to suppress the lusting of his heart after the object of it, Matt. v. 28. "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4. he will condemn and punish them: they shall

shall not only be excluded the kingdom of God, but “ have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,” Rev. xxi. 8.

A chaste conversation is highly becoming Christians ; to this they are strongly obliged by the abundant grace bestowed upon them. God, who is infinitely pure and holy, honours them with his special presence. How unwise, how ungrateful will it be in them to provoke and dishonour him with their pollutions ! 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. “ Know ye “ not that ye are the temple of God, and that the “ Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? If any man de- “ file the temple of God, him shall God destroy : “ for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye “ are.”

The bodies of believers are greatly dignified by their union with the undefiled Jesus, as their head. Should they not then abhor the thoughts of uniting them to a vile prostitute ? 1 Cor. vi. 15. “ Know “ ye not that your bodies are the members of “ Christ ? shall I then take the members of Christ, “ and make them the members of an harlot ? God “ forbid.”

Some reflections upon what has been said shall finish this discourse.

1. *Reflection.* We may hence learn, that they are guilty of the vilest abuse, who “ turn the grace “ of our God into lasciviousness.” How wretchedly is the grace of the gospel, which “ teacheth us, “ that denying worldly lusts, we should live sober- “ ly,” perverted by such as derive encouragement from it, to lead loose and vicious lives ! they act in direct opposition to its great design and genuine tendency. Do they not therefore deserve the severest condemnation ? To them, as it is expressed, Jude ver. 13. “ is reserved the blackness of darkness “ for ever.”

2. *Reflect.*

2. *Reflect.* Let us with shame and sorrow reflect upon our compliances with worldly lusts. Those of us who from our childhood have maintained the most sober character in the sight of men, have been too conformable to this world, have been too much governed by the desires of the flesh: and it is very fit we should be humbled, and grieve upon this account. Yet those who have run to great excess of riot should not despair: they ought to be encouraged by the grace of the gospel to turn unto the Lord. We read of heinous offenders, who have been deeply plunged into the pollutions of the world, that were “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

3. *Reflect.* Let us for the future strive more earnestly against worldly lusts, and implore the aids of divine grace to enable us to deny them. We should beware of satisfying ourselves with an outward appearance of sobriety: it ought to be our great care, that a spiritual holy principle be implanted in our souls; and this should be cultivated with diligence; for it has many adversaries; particularly, it will be vigorously opposed by the flesh, Gal. v. 17. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other.” The struggle there is betwixt these opposite principles in all true Christians, while they are in the body, must be supposed to give them no small uneasiness; but for their encouragement to take part with that spiritual principle which is in them; and to labour to strengthen it, they should consider, that the grace of God through Jesus Christ will grant them a complete deliverance from the law of sin which is in their members.

If we persist with courage in our Christian warfare, it shall ere long be happily accomplished: those
fleshly

fleshly lusts, which now war against our souls, shall be utterly destroyed, they shall not attend us into the other world; we shall no more be defiled or disquieted by them after death; when we cease to live here on earth, we shall be numbered among the spirits of the just made perfect; in a little while we shall rest from the labours of mortification, we shall have no corrupt self to deny in heaven, all the powers of our nature shall be there united in the service of God. Should not this consideration encourage and animate us in a dependence upon the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body? Let us continue fighting the good fight, and we shall in due time receive a crown of righteousness.

SERMON XLI.

Humility, with the fruits of it, *viz.* Meekness, Patience, Self-denial, and Contentment.

I PETER V. 5.

Be clothed with Humility.

IT was not, to be sure, without special reason, that our Saviour Christ said so much, as we find in his gospel, about the excellency and necessity of humility; and that he did so much to recommend this grace to us by his own example; that he pronounced his first blessing on the poor in spirit, Matt. v. 3. and that he expressly required it of all that come to him for rest and salvation, that they learn of him to be meek and lowly, Matt. xi. 29. He well knew the natural pride of our hearts, and of what vast importance humility is, to make us fit subjects of his kingdom of grace, and to prepare us for his kingdom of glory.

The apostles still followed their master's steps. They preached the same doctrine, they pressed the same duties, for they preached and wrote under the

the influence of his Spirit. They also recommend humility, and urge it on all the disciples of Jesus, with various motives, and with many arguments.

In our text St Peter recommends it to all sorts of Christians, whether elder or younger persons in office, or in years, whose special duties he had taught them in the preceding context. Humility is the duty of all, in whatever stations or conditions they are placed in the church, and in the world. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility:" and he adds a very weighty reason why all persons should practise humility, in the last clause of the verse; "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Humility, with the fruits of it, is to be the subject of this discourse; in which I shall attempt,

I. To explain the nature of humility;

II. To set before you the good fruits of it.

I. I am to explain the nature of humility. The Greek word *ταπεινοφροσυνη*, signifies a *low opinion* or *esteem*, which, when it is recommended to us under the notion of a virtue, must doubtless mean a low opinion of ourselves, not of other persons. This is very plainly that humility which we are exhorted in the text to be clothed with; even such a low opinion of ourselves, as will make us ready to submit to others, upon an opinion of their superior knowledge, wisdom, or grace.

The proper seat of humility is in the heart or mind. It is "humbleness of mind," Col, iii. 12. It is the "lowliness of heart," Matt. xi. 29. it is "poverty in spirit," Matt. v. 3. Humility then is an inward thing; it lies in the secret opinion

which a man has of himself. But as any prevailing passion of the mind will discover itself to others by its proper symptoms and effects; so will humility too give a visible tincture to a man's outward behaviour: Therefore we are exhorted in our text to be clothed with humility; which supposes some visible and outward appearance of it. But let it be remembered, that the proper seat of humility is in the heart or mind; and that may help us to detect some counterfeits of this excellent grace, at least if they are to be found in ourselves. For instance,

Humility does not consist merely in words, or making large professions of our own meanness and unworthiness: For though something of this sort will be the natural language of a humble mind, on proper occasions; yet it is very possible, that humble professions may flow from secret pride; as when a man discommends himself, or his own performances, on purpose to provoke others to praise him.

Nor does it consist in a mean garb, or an affected plainness and singularity in apparel.

Nor yet in affecting to associate and converse with persons of an inferior rank and condition, whereby some have gained the loud applauses of the vulgar for their great humility, and possibly this was the very thing they designed and aimed at.

In short, humility does not consist in any thing that is merely outward, but its proper seat is the hidden man of the heart. Mean clothes, and houses and furniture, and very humble professions, are, it may be feared, much more common in the world than truly humble hearts.

Humility consists in a low opinion or esteem. Now the opinion which we form of ourselves is either

either absolute or comparative; and which either way we judge, it is very certain, that a low opinion best becomes us, and is most suitable to our nature and state.

First, If we judge of ourselves absolutely, without comparing ourselves with any others: Humility and truth too requires, that our opinion should be very moderate and low. "Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but let him think soberly," Rom. xii. 3. And certain it is, that if ever we think highly of ourselves, we think as we ought not, and our judgment is not according to truth. If we think soberly, we must needs think that we are very mean and imperfect, very sinful and miserable creatures. We know but little, and we live, alas! to little good purpose. How weak are our intellectual powers! how narrow are the limits of human knowledge! after all the painful searches into natural causes and effects, which men have been labouring at for some thousands of years, how little do we know, in comparison of what we are ignorant of! The whole world about us is still full of wonders to us. And less still are we able to comprehend and know of the great God. "We cannot by searching find out God, nor know the Almighty to perfection; such knowledge is too wonderful for us." We find also, that we are liable to perpetual mistakes; our reason, nay sometimes our very senses, are apt to misguide and deceive us: and when we have got a little knowledge with much pains, how apt are we to lose it again? our memories are feeble and very treacherous. Surely if we think soberly, and according to truth, we can but have a low opinion of our own capacities. And a lower still must we have of our holiness and goodness: for we

we may plainly perceive that “in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing;” but we are naturally prone to sin, and averse to holiness: And even at best, when we are sanctified in part, yet what can we find in ourselves to be proud of? What vain and foolish thoughts employ our minds! What a mixture of corruption is there with every grace! and what a fully of sin in every duty! Humility will surely teach us, that we need some better righteousness than our own, to recommend us to the favour of an infinitely holy God. Again, as to the happiness of our state, what mortal does not feel that he is miserable? Here every man is born to trouble, and every one takes his share of it. Pains and diseases afflict our bodies, crosses and disappointments perplex our circumstances; the spirits sink, the gloom of melancholy gathers about the heart, and grief and sorrows overspread the whole world. Now it is a considerable branch of humility to be duly sensible of the meanness of our natures, and of the sinfulness and misery of the state we are in.

Secondly, Humility consisteth in having a low opinion of ourselves, as compared with others, whether with God, or with our fellow-creatures.

1. If we compare ourselves with the great God, it is not possible that we should think too highly of him, nor too meanly of ourselves; for “before him all the nations of the earth are as a drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the balance; they are before him as nothing, they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity,” Isa. xl. 15, 17. If with David we meditate on the excellency of God, and survey the illustrious displays of his power and wisdom, which are all around us, well may we say as he does, Psal. viii. 4. “Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!”

“him!” A little breathing dust and enlivened clay! How mean is his nature compared with God! mean in his original; and, alas! how are we now sunk below the dignity and excellency of our first creation! How abominable and filthy is man now grown! how guilty and depraved, how worthy of God’s wrath, and how utterly unworthy of his favour and blessing! And let us remember too, that we are unprofitable servants to God, who can make him no amends at all for what we have done amiss. Our goodness, was it ever so perfect, extendeth not unto him. And, alas! how little is the good that any of us do! Let the language of Jacob’s humility be ours, Gen. xxxii. 10. “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.”

Humility, in respect to God, further implies a sense of our dependence upon him, whose visitation preserveth our spirit, who holdeth our soul in life, and whose bounty feeds and clothes us all our lives long. And let us remember, that we depend upon him for spiritual and eternal blessings, no less than for temporal ones. We need his pardoning mercy [to save us from hell, and the influences of the good Spirit to fit us for heaven. “Of ourselves we are not sufficient for any thing, as of ourselves, but it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do,” if ever we do any thing to good purpose, and obtain everlasting salvation. Let us,

2. Consider the grace of humility in the other comparative view, as it respects our fellow-creatures. Here, let us remember how much inferior we are to the glorious angels, while they are infinitely beneath the blessed God. How weak is our strength, and how narrow is our knowledge compared with theirs! We pray that God’s will
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may be done by us upon earth, as it is done by them in heaven. But, alas! how much short is our practice of what we pray for! let us think of ourselves as an inferior rank of beings, far beneath-angels, creatures of a lower house and meaner original; very probably the meanest of all the reasonable creatures which God has made.

Or if we compare ourselves with our fellow-mortals in this world, humility bids us remember, that, whatever distinction providence has made in our favour, yet we are all equal by nature: We are branches from the same root, children of the same father, fellow-descendants from the same Adam. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth," Acts xvii. 16. How vainly do some men pride themselves in their nobler blood, and their descent from more honourable ancestors than others; God has made them all of one blood, and in a little time their bodies will all be turned into the same common dust. Let not those who stand, at present, on somewhat advanced ground, look down with contempt on the multitude below them, out of which they were lately taken, and with which they must shortly be mixed again. Let them remember that the difference which providence makes betwixt some men and others, is nothing near so great, and so considerable, as is their common relation to one another.

Humility bids us remember that we depend on one another. "The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both," Prov. xxii. 2. And he has so ordered it, that they should mutually depend on one another for their subsistence, convenience, and comfort; the master on the servant, as well as the servant on the master. The nobleman depends on the labourer

bourer and the mechanic, for his food and clothing, for his house and furniture; yea, the king himself is served by the field, and by the labours of them that till it. Let not the rich then despise the labouring poor, nor the poor envy the rich; but let both remember, that God has made them to depend mutually on one another.

Humility bids us remember that we have infirmities and faults as well as others; and therefore we have no reason to glory over others, upon a proud conceit that we are better than they. It becomes not one sinful man to say to another, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxv. 5. Especially when every man, who is not a very great stranger to his own heart, certainly knows of a great deal more evil and sin by himself, than he knows of in any other person. We ought in charity to hope the best of others, but as for ourselves, our heart knoweth its own bitterness, and sinfulness; and therefore it is but a reasonable thing, that in "lowliness of mind, each should esteem other better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3. St Paul was a fair example of this branch of humility which he recommends to others; for though he could not but know that, in some respects, he excelled the generality of Christians, and that "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles," yet he writes himself, "Less than the least of all thy saints," Eph. iii. 8. because he was sensible of so much remaining corruption in his own heart as he could hardly suspect was in any other Christian. Let a sense of our own faults keep us from despising others.

Humility bids us remember yet further, that our own virtue and goodness is very imperfect, as well as that of other men. There is no Christian but

may apply to himself those words of St Paul, in 2 Cor. xi. 29. in a different sense indeed, from what he meant by them, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Are the graces of any other Christian weak? so are mine. Is my neighbour ignorant? alas! I know but in part; or is he in some error? I am not infallible, perhaps I am so too; and if I am proud of my own share of knowledge, my error is very probably the greater of the two; "for if any man think he knoweth any thing," i. e. so as to be proud and vain of it, "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," 1 Cor. viii. 2. Thus much for the nature of humility. I proceed,

II. To set before you the good fruits of humility. To this grace we may apply these words of the prophet, Isa. xxxvii. 31. "It taketh root downward, and beareth fruit upward;" and the deeper the root is laid, the larger and fairer will the fruit be. Poverty of spirit begins and leads on that whole train of graces, on which Christ has pronounced his blessing in Matt. v. I shall only single out four eminent graces, which may serve, by way of instance, to shew you what good fruit humility will produce. These are meekness, patience, self-denial, and contentment.

I. Meekness is one fair and pleasant fruit which grows upon humility; and to this we may join the kindred grace of peaceableness, or quietness of spirit; for a meek and quiet spirit are set in close connection, and both together are said to make an ornament for a Christian, which is "of great price, in the sight of God himself," 1 Pet. iii. 4.

Meekness is opposite to wrath and passion, and peaceableness to contention, and both one and the other is the fruit of humility, for "only by pride cometh

"cometh contention," says Solomon, Prov. xiii. 10. and he makes an angry and a proud man to be inseparable characters, Prov. xxi. 24. "Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath." You may depend upon it, that a passionate and quarrelsome man is also a proud man; for he that has low thoughts of himself, and is duly sensible of his own faults, and failings, will more calmly bear with the faults of others. He will be calm and quiet under provocations and injuries; and suffer affronts without kindling into fury or meditating revenge. As when David was in a very humble frame, how little impression did Shimei's railing make upon him? how calmly did he bear the outrageous affront? So let him curse, said he, God suffers it to be so, and I have deserved it. Happy is the man who can be calm and cool, while other mens passions storm, and the hot sparks of anger fly thick around him. It is a lovely ornament to a Christian.

Humility will make us ready to forgive, and be reconciled to those that have affronted and injured us. For the man that has a humble sense of his own unworthiness of mercy from God, will surely find it no difficult task to persuade himself to shew mercy and to forgive men. "Is God so very gracious to me, says the humble soul, will he forgive my numberless offences, and be easily reconciled to so great a sinner: and shall I be implacable and cruel, and meditate revenge on my fellow-creatures?" God forbid it; may his grace prevent it.

Humility will teach us candour and calmness in disputes and controversies. The man that is duly sensible of the imperfection of his own knowledge, and how subject he is to mistake and error, knows how to make candid allowances for the mistakes

errors of others ; he will speak the truth in love, and he will in meekness instruct those that oppose and contradict it. It is because men have too high a conceit of their own understanding and judgment, that they can bear no opposition to their favourite notions, whereas, were they but sensible of their own ignorance, they would be disposed to judge more favourably of others who differ from them, and to treat them with meekness and candour.

2. Patience is another good fruit of humility ; with which we may join the kindred grace of submission. Now patience has respect either to God or man.

Patience in respect to God consisteth in a quiet submission to his afflictive providences, without murmuring or repining. Job was an illustrious instance of this grace ; but our Saviour Christ has set us the completest pattern of it of all others ; when, though he could not but express some reluctance as to his approaching sufferings, and a desire of deliverance from them, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," said he ; yet how quietly and fully did he submit to, and acquiesce in his Father's will ? He immediately adds, " Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt ; not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. And when those sufferings actually came upon him, he still bore them with patience ; and never uttered one murmuring word, nor harboured one repining thought. Patience keeps the mind calm and composed under afflictions ; and it will effectually prevent our making use of any unlawful means to get rid of them. Happy is the man who can possess his soul in patience. The Christian that has got his own will thus resigned to the will of God, has certainly got the true secret of happiness in this world. Now you will easily see how this good fruit natural-
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ly grows on humility; for the man that is rightly sensible of his own unworthiness, and evil deserts, will have little temptation to murmur against God, on account of, any worldly afflictions whatever. Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall a sinner out of hell complain and murmur? No, says the humble soul, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Mic. vii. 9. and I will bless his name, that it is no worse with me.

Were we duly sensible of our ignorance, and how little we know what is good for us, we should more readily submit to the conduct and dispose of an allwise God; and patiently wait the issues of Providence, to see what good he will please to bring out of them.

Were we humbly sensible of our dependence on God, and our vast obligations to him, we should not murmur as if he did us any wrong when he takes some earthly comforts from us; but we should say as Job did, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." He hath taken nothing but what he gave, nothing but what was his own, and nothing but what I had forfeited; blessed be his name for what he has left me still, and that death and hell is not my portion.

If we farther consider patience as it respects men, as it is opposite to peevishness and fretfulness at their faults and follies, this also is the fruit of humility; for if we were as sensible of our own faults and follies as we should be, we should more patiently bear with the faults and follies of others. If we knew our own weakness and ignorance, we should better know how to bear with the weakness and ignorance of others. So that the true way to possess our souls in patience, in every respect, and under

der all sort of provocations, is to be clothed with humility.

3. Self-denial is another good fruit of humility, and how necessary a duty that is, you will learn from those words of Christ, Luke ix. 23. "He said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." It seems we cannot be his disciples on other terms. We must be content to deny ourselves many pleasing gratifications of the flesh, and to submit to trouble and persecution, and it may be to martyrdom too, if we would approve ourselves faithful to our Lord and Saviour. At some times Christ requires harder things of his disciples than at others; but there is no time, nor state of the Christian church on earth, in which all his disciples are not bound to practise many acts of self-denial. We must deny ourselves the gratification of our inordinate appetites, and live up to the rules of sobriety and temperance. We must deny ourselves the esteem and the applauses of men; for never yet was true religion so much in fashion, any where in the world, but that a strict and conscientious practice of it would expose a man to popular contempt and scorn. We must deny ourselves bodily ease, when Christ and his interest calls us to active service. We must, very probably, deny ourselves worldly profits, and be content to see others grow rich by such methods of gain as we must not practise. In short, we must, as it were, crucify the flesh, and mortify every inordinate appetite and lust, if we pretend to follow Christ with any reasonable expectation of his favour and blessing. Nor yet is this so unpleasant and painful a duty as many take it to be; no, happy is the man who has got the mastery of his lusts, and the victory over the flesh, and who has learned to deny himself in obedience to reason, and to Christ.

And

And this also is a good fruit of humility; for from whence is it, but from an over-weaning value of ourselves, that we can so little brook any painful mortification? We surely esteem the body at too high a rate, when we pamper it to the hurt of the soul. Were we sensible of our own meanness, and vileness, and unworthiness, methinks it would be no hard matter to forego worldly honours or riches, when we cannot either obtain them, or hold them with a good conscience; so that we must first learn of Christ to be humble, that we may learn to deny ourselves and follow him.

4. The last good fruit of humility, which I shall here speak of, is contentment. Contentment I mean with our condition of life, and with that measure of worldly good things which Providence allots to us. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have," Heb. xiii. 5. Not but that you may lawfully endeavour by honest industry, to better your condition if God so pleases. Contentment does not consist in idleness, nor yet in a perfect indifference as to our worldly circumstances; but in an inward satisfaction in the disposals of Providence; or in such a well-pleasedness with our present condition, as will prevent our repining at it, though it be mean and low; and suppress all inordinate desire of a bigger portion of this world's good than God thinks fit to give us. Happy is the man that has learned contentment. If he is poor in the world, he is rich in himself; and he is a stranger to a thousand heart-aking cares and fears which continually torment the minds of the covetous. Now this good fruit also naturally grows on humility, for did we but know how little we deserve, a little would surely content us. The humble man remembers that, be his worldly condition what it will, it is unspeakably

ably better than he deserves. He is sensible that he is "less than the least of all God's mercies;" what son has he then to be contented with a little! and not only contented, but very thankful. While the proud man repines at another's prosperity, because he fancies himself more deserving, the humble saint, who esteems others better than himself, can rejoice in another man's more prosperous condition, and yet be contented with his own. He can bless God for a little, and comfortably enjoy it; while the covetous man repines and murmurs, and is always in want in the midst of abundance. Blessed humility, which leads to contentment! How fair is the fruit which grows on this tree! How sweet to the taste! How sovereign is its virtue!

Thus have I set before you the good fruits of humility. Now suffer me, before I close, to urge upon you the exhortation in our text by a few motives. "Be ye clothed with humility." For,

First, Consider, How high an approbation God has expressed of this grace, and how hateful pride is to him. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xvi. 5. "Pride and arrogancy does God hate," Prov. viii. 13. He resisteth the proud, and will surely bring him to shame and contempt one time or other; "but he giveth grace to the humble. Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly:" and he hath said, that "He will dwell with that man that is of an humble and contrite spirit," Isa. lvii. 15. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said Christ; they are blessed of their heavenly Father, and shall be blessed for ever, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Secondly, Consider what a lovely and engaging example of humility Christ hath set us, and that he expressly requires it of all that come to him, for life and salvation, that they learn of him to be meek and lowly. There is no grace for which he

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was more eminent throughout his whole life than humility. Remember "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor; who though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8. Here was humility and condescension indeed, from so great a height to stoop so low. Here was a pattern for us to imitate. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. How should it shame our pride to see the Son of God so humble! we learn of him to little purpose, if we do not learn humility.

Thirdly, Let me once more recommend humility as a necessary part of your preparation for heaven. The heavenly elders, whom St John saw in his vision, are said to "fall down before him that sat on the throne, and to cast their crowns before the throne," Rev. iv. 10. And the saints who shall be set with honour at the right hand of Christ in the day of judgment, are represented as having so low an opinion of themselves, that they can hardly believe that they had any way deserved the commendation that is given them; "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee," &c. Matt. xxv. 37. The same mind must be in us, such must our temper be, if ever we are fit for their society and company. Were we to carry pride with us to heaven, it would soon cast us out again, as it did the devils long ago; but they are only humble souls, who shall be exalted in the presence of their humble Saviour, and to the society of humble saints and angels.

Be ye therefore clothed with humility. Labour for a large measure of this lovely, this fruitful grace ; and call in divine aids to assist your weak endeavours. Beg it of the God of all grace, that he would so impress your minds, by the influence of his good Spirit, with a sense of your sins, frailties, and imperfections, as may effectually suppress every proud thought, and lay your souls low at the foot of his sovereign mercy. Beseech him to clothe you now with the garment of humility, and thereby make you meet to wear the robes of eternal glory,

SERMON

SERMON XLII.

Mortification of Sin, Resistance of Temptations, and Watchings against sinful Compliances.

EPHESIANS VI. 13.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand.

SELF-preservation, as to what concerns the natural life, is one of the first and confessed dictates of the law of nature. Nor is the care of our souls, and the life proper to them in the exercises and attainments of religion and virtue, less our incumbent duty. Yet there is this difference between these two branches of self-preservation, that the former is far more easy and agreeable to us than the latter. Self-love commonly draws us powerfully enough to the care of animal life, so that we are much more liable here to exceed than to be defective. Therefore being so well understood, and so strongly enforced from nature itself, as to want a check rather

ther than any additional aids, it is wisely left to be implied, without being explicitly commanded in scripture. But now, with regard to the spiritual life, matters are otherwise. Here the principle of self-love exerts itself very faintly. Here we are prone to shut our eyes against the dangers and snares to which our souls are continually exposed, and to use no care to prevent or escape them; nay, by our negligence and folly, we make and increase them to ourselves, and wilfully run into them. Here therefore we have need to be directed, warned, and quickened in the most clear, express, and affecting manner.

To this purpose the apostle throughout the paragraph, to which the text belongs, compares Christians to soldiers, and the methods of their defence against the formidable forces he represents them as encountering with, to a complete military furniture: and he thus exhorts them in my text, as he had before, at verse 11. "Take unto you the whole
"armour of God, that ye may withstand in the
"evil day," in the season of actual engagement; as what you may expect to be very trying and sharp, to put you hard to it, to strain as it were every nerve and sinew, and severally to exercise all the powers of nature: and "having done all, that ye
"may stand;" which if you do, it will be well, and even wonderful.

The method wherein I shall handle this duty of resisting our spiritual enemies shall be this:

First, To represent the enemies or temptations we are in danger from, and are called to resist.

Secondly, To consider the nature and means of our resisting them.

First, Let us consider our spiritual enemies. It

is sin itself in all its numerous instances of omission or commission, which is the capital enemy of our souls. This is directly opposite to holiness, which is our true life; it enfeebles and disables us so far as it prevails from doing good; and where it has the full ascendant, it extinguishes quite, or rather prevents the entrance of the divine life, and exposes the soul to utter and eternal ruin. Whatever other enemies there are of our souls, they become such in reality, only in virtue of an alliance and relation to sin, and ascending to bring us under its power. And they are all comprehended under these three known articles, the flesh, the devil, and the world.

I. The flesh is one great enemy and tempter we have to do with; that is, as it commonly signifies in scripture when represented as a principle of sin, the corrupt inclination in our present nature to what is sinful, with an aversion to what is spiritually good. This is called by the apostle, "the sin that dwelleth in us," Rom. vii. 17, 20. It has the nature of sin in itself, and it is a permanent and most powerful solicitor to the actual commission of all sin; therefore it is called by the apostle "a law," that even when he would do good, evil was present with him," ver 21. Such a depraved disposition and disorderly frame, may well be denominated flesh; because it is conveyed by natural generation to all the posterity of Adam; nor is it wholly rectified in any in the present life: as also because it has for its principal seat and occasion of operation, the body, and those parts of our constitution, which are nearly allied to it; and it has for its main gratification things fleshly, sensible, and material; whence the lusts most proper to it are promiscuously called *fleshly lusts*, and *worldly lusts*. One of our greatest and most constant dangers of being

being drawn from God and our duty into sinful ways, arises from our senses and appetites, our passions and imaginations. The first rise and motions of these before the formal consent of the will, may involve us in guilt, and this they do as often as they are conversant about unlawful objects, or about those that are lawful excessively and unseasonably. For it was the office of reason to watch their motions, and to prevent their exorbitance, and unseasonable intrusion. Yet how quickly do they get the start, and kindling into criminal fervours, considerably defile us, before our rational powers take the hint! And then such is the quick and strong flow of a carnal fancy, such is the vehemency and impetuosity of the sensitive appetites, and of the passions, that they have a mighty force and tendency to darken the mind, to overbear and silence the voice of reason, to master the present or past resolutions of the will, and in spite of them to constrain it into a compliance with their irregular dictates, and even to captivate the judgment to an approbation and justification of these compliances.

Moreover, our corrupt nature has its lusts of the mind, such as are most proper to our spirits, though there may be some animal mixtures in them; and material things may be often provocatives and gratifications to them, as well as things spiritual; such are pride, vain curiosity, malice, envy, stubbornness of will, and the like.

All these motions and propensities to sin, which naturally belong to us, and are strengthened more and more by custom, do so insensibly betray us to sin by the inordinacy of their sudden eruptions, and still urge us on with such restless and violent importunity, even against the efforts of reason to more sin, in the acts perfective of them, and in obstructing the exercises of holiness; that they are cer-
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tainly our worst and most dangerous tempters. A man's enemies here, in a way of eminency, are those of his own household. Other tempters without would have but little power against us, were it not for this weak and treacherous party within us, which not only is ever ready to join them, but it does as it were invite and seek them. Thus the apostle James, chap. i. 14. fixes the root and main force of temptation here; "every man is tempted" when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Nor must the apostle Paul be thought to contradict him, when he says, "we wrestle not" with flesh and blood; his meaning being this, that we not only do so. Wherefore,

II. The devil is another great enemy of our souls, and is continually engaged to tempt us away from God to the practice of iniquity. He is indeed professedly an enemy to us. Out of hatred and envy he prosecutes a mischievous and destructive design against our spiritual and everlasting interests: whereas it is through misapprehension and false appearances we prove enemies to ourselves. Divine revelation only certainly informs us of such invisible tempters. And it assures us, that there is a great number of them, even all those apostate spirits that first left their own heavenly habitations, by rebelling against God; some or other of whom were permitted by God to enter into paradise, and there seduce our first parents to sin. The apostle speaks of them as a very numerous and mighty army, ver. 12. of this chapter; "We wrestle," says he, "against" "principalities, against powers, against the rulers" "of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places." Yet so united are they in their cursed endeavours to ensnare men in sin, that they are for the most part spoken of singularly as but one person; which seems to intimate also,
that

that there are as many of them at least, as there are men at any time living together on the face of the earth. Their agency and influence over men is set forth in very strong language. Thus is the devil said "to work (even with a mighty energy as the word signifies) in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. "to blind the minds of them that believe not," 2 Cor. iv. 4. "to keep as a strong man armed," those under his rule as a garrisoned place, in quiet and peaceable possession, Luke xi. 21. "to take in his snare men captive at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. and to "be a father of sinners whose lusts they do." John viii. 44. Yet most certain it is, that all this does not amount to any compulsion or necessity imposed on men to sin. His closest access, and most vehement solicitations, take not away their moral liberty; but they have still the natural power of turning their minds, or at least their wills, off or from the things proposed, as well as to them. So then, it is only by first gaining their own consent, that he works in them to defile and overcome them. And therefore his most horrid motions and suggestions, when they are merely insinuated to the mind, but instead of being liked and consented to, they raise an inward abhorrence and opposition of the whole soul to them, leave no more taint on it, than our happening to hear or see the wicked words and works of any of our fellow-creatures without our choice and desire, and greatly to our uneasiness and dissatisfaction. In short, his work and manner of tempting, like that of our own species, is but objective to the intellectual and rational faculties, by presenting to them ideas and arguments to convince, deceive, and persuade, only with the advantage of nearer application to our spirits. And yet for the most part he advances to our spirits by the means of our animal frame, and what be-
longs

ongs to it. All these avenues to the mind lie open to him, and within his reach, the interior which are planted beyond the access of mortals, as well as the exterior. Thus by acting vigorously either on the senses, or on an object present to them, or on both together, he can give it stronger colours of either the agreeable or the disagreeable, than naturally it has, that it may strike the sense with unusual force, according to the kind of the object, and the use he wants to make of it. Is he not also well able, by divine permission, to excite irregular ferments in the blood and animal spirits, and thereby to make way for the disorderly working of the passions? then, when these are already agitated in whatever way, to heighten and inflame them more; and afterward to improve them as favourable occasions to more disturbance and sin? How great likewise is his power over the imagination, to revive old, to spring up new, and to mix together strange, wild, and incoherent images, and in this secret cell to work a variety of distracting thoughts, and such as may best promote his designs, and to hold them for a long time together before the mind! Can he not also, and often does, urge and solicit the will and active powers by dint of importunity, to comply with his proposals, as hoping to weary and tire out the soul by ceaseless applications?

We read also of the beguiling subtlety, the wiles and devices of the devil. 2 Cor. xi. 3. Eph. vi. 11. 2 Cor. ii. 11. Thus he craftily conceal himself as much as possible, while he is doing us all the mischief he can, for which his invisibility and spirituality gives him special opportunities. He suits his baits to the different constitutions, tempers, and circumstances of persons. He chooses seasons and instruments most proper for his purpose, and will for a time retire, that he may return again less suspected. He varies and shifts his methods at every turn,

or carries on two or more plots at once, in hope that one at least may take; and sometimes he chiefly aims at a more remote and deep design than what he has immediately in hand, like soldiers making a feint of attacking one place to draw off the enemy thither, that they may surprize another unguarded, which their main view was upon. It is also a common and too successful stratagem, when he sees men are set on relinquishing one vice, for him insensibly to draw them into another as bad, which lies on the opposite side, as well as to urge them on to the extreme borders of what is lawful, or of any particular grace and virtue. And various other ways of artful seduction the evil one is master of, which it is not easy to trace, and which we cannot now enquire into.

But yet further,

III. The present world is a tempting enemy to our souls. This is the grand repository and storehouse of most of the materials which our own hearts and the devil work up into occasions and means of our criminal pollutions. Not as though the world were in itself necessarily set in opposition to our spiritual interests: no, for every creature of God, every event and state of the present life as falling under his supreme disposal, is good, and capable of being made favourable and subservient to them. What makes our danger here, is too strong a bias and turn in our own frame to present worldly objects, and their easy access to our hearts by our senses, which they continually strike upon. Hence the three chief articles of worldly good are elegantly and properly enough expressed by those parts of our corrupt and fleshly nature, which they respectively gratify, and commonly draw forth to an excess; sensual pleasures, “by the lusts of the flesh;” riches, by “the lusts of the eye;” and the praise of men,

men, or honours, by "the pride of life." 1 John ii. 16.

What is there in the world that does not bid fair to entangle our hearts in guilt? The good and desirable things of it, how apt are they to excite immoderate desires and cares for attaining or keeping them, an intemperate enjoyment of them, too high a delight in them, a fond attachment to them, and regret at parting with them, pride and haughtiness toward our inferiors, and forgetfulness and neglect of God? The evil and afflictive things of life, on the other hand, do they not contain as powerful provocations to another set of sins, distrust, anxiety, discontent, envy, impatience, and the like? And as the things of the world, and the different states and conditions of men in it, are constant snares to religion and virtue: so are not men in like manner one to another, by evil examples, by bad counsels, by mutual affronts and injuries stirring up wrath, with its many sad and sinful effects, and by reproaches and persecutions raised against the professors of strict piety?

But it is time to come now, *Secondly*, to the resistance we are to make against all these enemies of our souls, these temptations and tempters to sin. There is no need to propose distinct methods of resisting each of them severally: since, for the most part, there is a concurrence of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in one and the same temptation to particular sins. The world or some worldly object and consideration, is usually the bait: our own evil hearts and corrupt inclinations are the inward prompters, and the devil with wicked men the external prompters to us to embrace it. However, it may not be amiss to observe, that a belief of the devil's having a part in most temptations, and with his good will in all, and that our compliance would be a gratifica-

tion to him, will go a great way to weaken the force of any temptation, as it will wholly disarm some particular ones. May we not thus serve ourselves of it in virtue of that natural kind of aversion and dread we have of this wicked spirit, as justly esteemed our avowed enemy, and the author of only evil and mischief to us? "Is not the hand of my great adversary in all this? and can any thing truly good for me proceed from such a hand? Am I not well aware that all his proposals do only counterfeit a regard to my honour and happiness but really wrap up the blackest designs at my ruin and destruction? and shall I be willing to gratify such a foe who can never be pleased, but God whom I owe every thing to will be displeased, and my own soul brought into extreme hazard?" Let this caution only be carried along with us here, that though we may well and happily use this consideration in the most extensive view to fortify our minds against compliances, yet we must not have recourse to it to extenuate our guilt in case of our complying. For we are still to remember, that it is our own free consent which we ought to withhold, who or whatever tempts, that gives the finishing stroke; and this being yielded, whenever we sin, makes us truly culpable whether we do it with or without a foreign tempter.

Let it also be further observed with regard to the nature of that resistance which is to be made to all our spiritual enemies; that sin being the chief, and utterly incompatible with our true interest, is the immediate object and end of this resistance, and we must strive with it both in an offensive and in a defensive manner. We must not only endeavour to keep it at as great a distance from us as possible, but we must hate it, and awaken in our minds the keenest resentments and strongest antipathy against it;

it; and since it has already a place in our nature and hearts, we must seek to slay, destroy, and root it out in all its parts, motions, and corrupt inclinations that are within us. Thus the scripture often expresses our duty in respect to sin to be a positive opposition, a mortification and aim at its destruction. But we must not so hate and injuriously treat the flesh or any of our bodily members; we must not go about to eradicate our appetites and passions, under pretence of their being occasions to sin and hindrances to religion and virtue. These, as parts of our natural frame, are good and worthy of our prudent care and tendance; and God has provided lawful objects and means enough to exercise and gratify them, only debarring excess, that we might have the less temptation to let them out on those that are forbidden to us. No more must we hate and abdicate the world, much less hate and persecute any of our fellow-creatures to preserve ourselves and others from the infection of their principles and practices. It is our only care and business, as to all tempting objects and instruments, since they are not evil in themselves, nor necessarily infer our seduction to sin, and as they may be considered abstractedly from it, to arm ourselves against them in a way of defence for the prevention of their fastening sin and guilt on us.

Let us now attend to the properties and qualifications of this resistance of sin, and all temptations to it; which will comprehend together the means and motives of this duty; and I shall endeavour to give them a practical turn as I go along, to serve instead of application.

First, then, Our resistance must be sincere. It must be principled and animated with true grace in the heart, a real love to God and holiness, a true and fixed hatred of sin. Hence also it must be universal;

universal; and that as to the subject and object together, the whole soul, and every sin. A just and real opposition to sin will not be seated in one or two powers of nature only. It is far enough from being genuine, if the passions of fear and shame, moved by regards to men and temporal things, rather than to God, and things invisible and eternal wholly influence it; nay, if natural conscience witness against sin as base and vile, and threaten its commission with inward stings and twinges, a resistance made to it on this ground may not still be sincere. For all the faculties must concur in it. While it possesses and lists into its service those that have been mentioned, it has still a spring higher up in the soul, even a settled aversion of will to sin, in the formal notion of it, as contrary to God, as well as to our own happiness, an habitual purpose, and prevalent desire not to offend. And consequently such a resistance will be levelled against all sin; the reasons and grounds of opposition to sin in itself, holding the same in respect to one as to another.

Let us then enquire: do we fight against sin from principle? Is our whole heart and soul engaged in this warfare, as prevalently set for God and holiness, and not patiently bearing the hindrance and corruption which sin gives to this our supreme and governing design? or is it only a concern for reputation and interest in the world, an awe of men, or at most the dread of hell, and the mere workings of natural conscience, which have drawn us into this combat that little way we have gone in it? Are our hearts in the mean time secretly going after sin? do they suffer a very disagreeable restraint in being kept from it, and have they no tendencies or motions toward God? What then is this but a forced and feigned resistance, like that of a traitor in an army, who, though he is listed, and fights for
a time

a time on one side, yet has his heart on the other, and only waits for a favourable opportunity to go over to it? Again, do we strive against every sin? do we even bestow our chief attention and labour on those which most easily beset us, and are very intimate and dear to us, like a right hand, or a right eye? Do we pursue them into the inmost recesses of the soul, and cherish a steady purpose of prosecuting them to death, though they often foil us, and wound our spirits sore? and do we aim our strokes at the very habit of sin within us, at heart-iniquities? or, on the contrary, do we little mind these darling or retired sins? Are we content with escaping the grosser and more public pollutions of the world, or those which are not peculiarly troublesome to us, and with loping off some of the distant and luxuriant branches, while we spare more private, or our own iniquities, and suffer sin to live and thrive at the root, where the ax must be chiefly laid in all true mortification?

As we would then resist sin really and effectually, let us see that we get and maintain the truth of grace in our hearts, the love of God, and the hatred of all iniquity. This must be the girdle of our loins, and seems to be meant by that piece of spiritual armour which is first mentioned by the apostle the verse after the text. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt with the girdle of truth." It is integrity and uprightness that must preserve us.

II. Our resistance must be intelligent and judicious. Next to a sound heart, a clear and enlightened mind is a main preservative against temptations. 'Tis an armour of light that Christians are called to put on, Rom. xiii. 11. Our spiritual enemies take the advantage of night and darkness to prevail over us. Satan and our own lusts together cast a mist on the understanding, that it may

may not distinguish between good and evil. Hence, as it quickly loses sight of divine truths in their evidence and power, it is more readily imposed on with false reasonings, misrepresenting, and even contradicting them. And when the devil has thus in a manner put out men's eyes, or made them useless, (which he can do in an hour of temptation to a strange and surprising degree) how easily may he lead them captive whither he pleases?

If we would not therefore give our spiritual enemies their desirable advantage of fighting with us in the dark, we must seek to lay into our minds a rich store of divine truths, and to keep them in our easy view, that they may be always ready for our use in a time of need. The word of God, for this end, should be continually by us, as the great magazine of all our spiritual supplies. Is it in our apostle's allegory "the sword of the Spirit?" Eph. vi. 17. let it then be never out of our hands, or reach. According to the psalmist's representation and practice, we should even "hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against God," Psal. cxix. 11. Particularly, should we so study the law of God, as to furnish our minds with a comprehensive knowledge of the principal articles of sin and duty. And it may be very proper to have some short and clear rules and precepts for particular duties, and against particular sins. by much meditation and frequent inculcation imprinted deep on our memories.

III. Our resistance is to be maintained in the name and authority of God. When we have fixed in our minds and memories some suitable word of command, directly pointed against any evil we are tempted to, we must produce it in the hour of temptation, hold it fast, and urge it home on our consciences, and against our tempters, to awe both ourselves

ourselves and them with God's authority stampt on
 it. Here is the weapon of proof recommended and
 consecrated to our use by the Captain of our salvation,
 who first so skilfully and successfully managed it in
 his encounters with the tempter, It is written thus
 and thus. "This is the clear voice of God in
 " his word. Be then the numbers ever so many
 " of those who venture on unlawful practices, is
 " it not written again, "Thou shalt not follow a
 " multitude to do evil?" Exod. xxiii. 2. Be
 " their figure in life ever so considerable, be the ar-
 " guments for transgression ever so plausible and
 " powerful, I will abide by the word of God against
 " them all, nor will I ever give up so plain and
 " certain a dictate as this, that I ought to hearken
 " to God, and obey him rather than men, or any
 " creatures whatsoever. For consider, O my soul,
 " how much more thy concern is with God than
 " with the whole universe of beings besides,
 " which as well as thyself do all absolutely depend
 " on him? Has he not an incontestible right to
 " require of thee whatever he pleases? Is he not
 " a far better Judge of what is fit for thee to do,
 " and what not, than thyself or any others? and
 " are not his wisdom, rectitude, and blessedness, a
 " sufficient assurance that he demands nothing but
 " what is right and equal? Is he not determined,
 " by his holiness, justice, and truth, as he is surely
 " able by his power, to maintain his right? O
 " what poor and contemptible things are all the
 " affrightments, and all the allurements of the
 " world, to his almighty wrath, to his almighty
 " love! Think also, O my soul, what a debtor
 " his innumerable benefits have made thee to him,
 " more than to all the world. And is the prospect
 " of secrecy suggested at any time as a reason for
 " thy doing any iniquity? Ask then, Where is the
 " place which lies out of the sight of his all-seeing

“ eye, and what spectators and witnesses hast thou
 “ half so much reason to be afraid or ashamed of
 “ as a God? How canst thou then do this, or the
 “ other wickedness, and sin against God, and such
 “ a God?”

IV. A deep sense of the vile nature, and certain danger of sin, should animate our resistance. No other ideas of sin should be entertained by us, but what may strike us with horror at it, as a monster of deformity and baseness, the bane of all order and good, an evil unmixed and unparalleled, the irreconcilable enemy both to men and God, and the very worst of all plagues, darting forth its malignity at Heaven itself, as well as spreading its deadly influence through our whole race. There is no fear of over-doing; we cannot have too black and shocking thoughts of sin in general, or of particular iniquities; and these we should enure ourselves to, that we may never be induced to spare any, because of their shining colours, their attractive appearances, and their fair promises. We must give our souls also awful warning of the danger of complying with a temptation to any known sin, let it be suggested to us as ever so small, and our yielding once as even a means to cure the inclination for the future. Vain and fond pretence! who ever by indulging quenched, and did not rather inflame his lust? what sin is properly small? That which may be in itself smaller than others, yet if done knowingly and wilfully swells into a vast size, often introduces hardness of heart, brings on a long train of more sin and mischief, and proves such a step out of the way of life into the high road of death, as may never be recovered after. Nor must we forget to alarm our consciences with the hell of everlasting misery hereafter, which will be the portion of all who live in sin; not buoying ourselves

selves up with a flattering hope of escaping it, while we willingly commit known iniquity ; which hope no privileges or profession can support, according to the rule of God's word : " If I live after the flesh, I shall die : If I put not sin to death, it will be my death, and both procure and add stings to my eternal torment." Thus to fear the worst, is an useful and appointed means to save from it, and in some seasons, those especially of security, and when sin has already a great hold of the heart and affections, it is necessary to the best of men here for their preservation. But yet,

V. Resistance must be evangelical, in the faith and hope of the gospel, that it may be hearty and effectual. Faith, and that chiefly to be understood of an evangelical faith, though including too a faith in all other divine truths, makes the main piece of armour for defence in the apostle's enumeration, and is recommended in a special manner ; " above all, taking the shield of faith," Eph. vi. 16. and hope of salvation, as our helmet is joined with it, ver. 17. 1 Thes. v. 8.

Here the cross of Christ will serve mightily to excite and invigorate our resistance against sin, as it is often mentioned to this purpose in the New Testament : and thus faith may converse with it in several views : " Shall Christ die for sin, and can I think myself left at liberty to live in it ! Was he content to endure so much agony and anguish to atone its guilt, and shall I be a willing slave to its power, and submit to no labour and pains to overcome it ! How loudly does his dying for sin proclaim that it is an evil and bitter thing, most contrary to God, and so contrary to our interest, that it is impossible they should ever be happy in whom sin reigns ! And am I not told, that he gave himself to redeem his people

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“ from all iniquity !” Shall I then, by indulging to
 “ sin, at once defeat all my expectations from the
 “ death of Christ, and as far as in me lies make the
 “ end of it void ? have I any the least love to him,
 “ how then can I have any affection for sin, any
 “ pleasure or patience in harbouring it, which most
 “ certainly proved so cruel and painful an enemy
 “ to him, the alone cause of all his heavy and
 “ grievous sufferings, and death itself ! My soul
 “ fires at the thought ; I detest and doom to death
 “ all my sins, that have so severely handled, and
 “ at last slain my best and dearest Friend. His
 “ death has determined theirs : and I will willing-
 “ ly fore none of them any longer.” O how
 engagin^y will such a believing look on a bleed-
 ing, dying Saviour, not only melt the soul into
 grief for all past sins, but disarm a present tem-
 ptation of all its force !

Further, the conquests of Christ, who has gone
 before us in this warfare, and vanquished all our
 spiritual enemies, both as our Pattern, and as our
 Head, his all-sufficient grace, with the assurances
 given, that he will stand by all who sincerely en-
 gage in the cause of holiness against sin, and secure
 them finally victorious ; what springs of encourage-
 ment are these which the gospel only affords, and
 which our faith is to make a constant use of ?
 “ We are to be strong in the Lord, and in the
 “ power of his might, in the grace which is in
 “ Christ Jesus.” Eph. vi. 10. 2 Tim. ii. 2. Do
 we sensibly experience our own weakness, and
 how ready we are at every turn to faint and yield
 in an hour of temptation ? and are we prone to
 be cast down, both in the sense of our having so
 often given way already, and in the fear of some
 present or future corruption and temptation quite
 mastering us ? Let us then cast our eyes upward

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to the glorious and gracious Captain of our salvation. He pities us under all our toils and infirmities, and will not cast us off for our many slips and miscarriages, while we are sincerely striving against sin, but will wash them all away in his own blood; nor will he “suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will make way for “our escaping,” either by a providential remove of the temptation, when he knows it too hard for us, or by pouring in new supplies to enable us to overcome it. 1 Cor. x. 13. And thus let us assure our hearts, that “through him who hath “loved us, we shall be even more than conquerors,” all our enemies being made eventually to serve and promote our salvation.

Finally, our faith must be often conversing with the promises of a rich reward of spiritual blessings and consolations here, and of eternal glory hereafter, a crown of life that fadeth not away, which shall be conferred on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ. 'Tis the gospel only which certainly assures us that our labour shall not be in vain, and that there is a noble prize before us richly worth our contending for, and which will finish, and abundantly recompense all our conflicts. What a cluster of these precious promises is there in the second and third chapters of the Revelations made to him that overcometh!

VI. Our resistance must be speedy and resolute. In consequence of the encouragements raised by the faith and hope of the gospel, we should strengthen in ourselves, and avow in the face of all our tempters from the first overture, a firm and vigorous resolution not to comply. Depart from me, should we say to the devil and wicked men in the courageous and sprightly language of the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 115. “Depart from me,
“ye

“ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.” ’Tis an irresolute wavering temper which encourages attempts: but such a noble stand from the beginning, such a fixed determination, and being at a point at once, soon beats off or prevents an attack. Even the devil himself (shameless as he is) will retire before it, if not for shame, yet that he may not lose time from the pursuit of some more easy prey. Resist the devil then, “stedfast in the faith, and he will flee from you.” 1 Pet. v. 9. Jam. iv. 7. This brave resolution of soul may very probably be meant by the breast-plate of righteousness the Christian is always to have on, Eph. vi. 14.

VII. And lastly, it must be watchful and prayerful. “Watch and pray,” says our Lord, “that ye enter not into temptation,” so as to be overcome by it, Matt. xxvi. 41. And so the apostle, Eph. vi. 8. As we have an active part to manage in making resistance to our spiritual enemies, how can we expect to do it without a continual circumspection; and as this is made our duty, how can we look for divine assistance in the neglect of it? Let us watch then to find out all our enemies, their various ways of assaulting us, and their first motions and onsets, which are generally very secret and insensible. Let us have a wakeful and wary eye all abroad, and never slight our danger thro’ a rash presumption which has proved injurious to many; nor run of our own accord into the way of temptation. Let us attend even to distant and future prospects, as well as to present appearances, narrowly observing what changes age and circumstances make in our temper and inclinations, which may occasion new and unknown trials to our spirits. Let us watch likewise to the regular exercise and discharge of every grace and duty. This is to

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to "have our feet shod with the preparation of
"the gospel of peace," one piece of spiritual armour, Eph. vi. 15. that serves much to prevent the assault of the enemy, while he sees us already employed in our proper work, and which will make us ready to receive him. And yet as all our watchful endeavours (which we are exceeding prone also to remit) will not be sufficient of themselves, let us seek by constant prayer to derive down the influences of divine grace and strength into our hearts, to help us in every time of our need; nor let us forget to pray daily, with a particular view to daily dangers and temptations, as not knowing what may arise, as our Lord has taught us in these words of his excellent form, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XLIII.

Christian Diligence, with the Blessings that attend it, in opposition to Sloth, Security, Backsliding, &c.

PROVERBS XIII. 4.

*The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing;
but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

SHOULD we apply these words to labour or learning, to trade or religion, to the concerns of this life, or that which is to come, still we shall find this sentence of Solomon true and useful; it is a remark well worthy of our attention, and our best improvement. The son of diligence, considered either as a man or a Christian, is in a fair way to obtain the good things he seeks: his desire shall be satisfied; "his soul shall be made fat," or filled with them; he shall increase in earthly possessions, he shall abound in knowledge and wisdom, or he shall grow rich in grace and the fruits of righteousness; but the slothful wretch shall be poor indeed. In vain doth he sit with folded hands, and wish for
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the blessings of nature or grace, of time or eternity: the idle hand shall be empty still, he shall desire in vain, and shall never possess.

Diligence is the appointed theme of my discourse, the diligence of a man or a Christian. I shall endeavour, first, to describe it in all the several parts of it, and then take a short survey of the blessings temporal and spiritual which attend it; and, by the way, I shall give some occasional hints of the crime and punishment of the contrary vices.

First, let us inquire what are the several things which are implied in true diligence, whether it relate to the things of this life or the life to come.

1. Diligence includes the employment of every part of our time in proper business; and thus it stands in opposition both to sauntering and doing nothing at all, to trifling, or doing what is to no purpose, and to mistiming the businesses which are to be done.

Every person in the world has some proper business to do daily, for God, for themselves, or for the good of their fellow-creatures. Mankind, even in the golden age of innocence, was not made for idleness. Adam was put into the garden of Eden, "to dress and keep it," Gen. ii. and it is our duty wisely to enquire what is our proper work, and to employ ourselves in it. But how many idle creatures are there in the world that act quite contrary to this rule?

(1.) How many do we find who saunter their lives away, and let their days, and months, and years run to waste, in doing nothing at all, as tho' they were brought into this life to eat, drink, and sleep; to gaze away life, and then to lie down in death! O wretched abuse of these precious blessings, life and time! "I must work," saith our Lord, "while it is day," I must do the particular

work, "for which my Father sent me hither: the night is coming when no man can work," John ix. 4. Let us all be imitators of our blessed Jesus. The business of the rich is to render their wealth useful to the good of the world, and to the interests of religion: the business of the poor is to labour to obtain their daily bread, and not be burdensome to their neighbours, nor useless inhabitants of the earth: the business of a scholar is to improve his mind in daily knowledge; and as for all the learned professions, their business is to lay out that knowledge for the ease and happiness of mankind in this world, or the next.

It is the proper business of a sinner to seek after converting grace, to return to God by repentance, to secure his salvation by faith in the Son of God, and all instances of new obedience. It is the proper business of a true Christian to grow in grace, to adorn his profession with holiness, and abound in good works. It is the necessary and daily business of a mortal and an accountable creature to prepare for death and judgment, that he may die in peace, and give up his account with joy, if he should be summoned away on a sudden. Thus it appears every creature hath some proper business, both relating to this life and the life to come; and therefore a sauntering and idle life is a high offence to the God of nature and grace, time, and eternity.

(2.) Trifling or wasting time in impertinencies, is another vice contrary to this part of diligence. Doing nothing to the purpose, is little better than doing nothing at all: as if a youth designed for the study of divinity should lay aside his Bible, and spend his whole time in measuring squares and circles, and mathematical figures; or if a man of trade, or an artificer, who must provide daily bread
for

for himself and his household, should waste his days in coffee-houses, still learning, and still discoursing of the rights of election of the kings of Poland, or in adjusting the bloody quarrels between the Turkish and the Persian armies. This is such an impertinence in the sight of God and men, as deserves the just reproaches of men, and punishment from the hand of Providence. To wear out those seasons in prating and tattling, which are appointed for useful labour or business, is a wretched abuse of time, and merits the frequent censure of Solomon, the wisest of men. "The talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty, and a prating fool shall fall." And too many there are who pretend to Christianity, but they are only talking Christians, instead of being active in the duties of their appointed station, and their zeal for religion appears no where but in their tongues. Others also shall be pronounced idle, and triflers at the bar of God, who lay out all their spirits in little controversy, perhaps about mint, annise, and cummin, or in vindication of rites, and forms, and ceremonies which God never appointed; when they neglect the weighty matters of the law and the gospel, justice and goodness, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus, the correction of their tempers, and the amendment of their lives.

(3.) Again, mis-timing the various actions of life is another abuse of time, and contrary to true diligence. "There is a time," saith the wise man, Prov. iii. "for every purpose under heaven, and every thing is beautiful in its season." If we should be dancing at midnight, and sleeping at church, or seeking our diversions in an hour of business; if we should work with our hands when the season calls us to our closets,

closets, or spend that time in reading and praying, which is appointed for the labours and cares of the family; these are all failures in our duty, and contrary to the true diligence which the word of God requires. That is but trifling or impetence in one season, which is a necessary duty at another; nor will any works out of season prosper or succeed well, or be approved of God: and yet there are some persons so habitually guilty of this folly, that whensoever the certain season of any duty returns, they are ever beginning to do something else first, which perhaps they did not think of before, which would be much better left till afterward Prov. vi. 6, 7, 8. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," who seizes the days of summer and fair weather, to gather her food, and hides herself at winter, and lives upon her former provisions.

2. The second thing implied in true diligence, is earliness in opposition to delay. If we consider ourselves as men; the early man shews that his heart is in his work; but he that from hour to hour, or from day to day, delays the practice of any duty or service, gives sufficient notice that he doth not like it, and would never perform it at all, if he could safely avoid it. If we begin betimes the service of the day, we happily provide against hindrances, and we are not in danger of being thrown into a hurry by accidental avocations: we have hours before us to do our work well, to review and correct it: we keep our temper, and are composed amidst our cares and labours and finish our designs with honour. But if we suffer our work to lie neglected, till the latter end of the appointed time, we are ever in a hurry, in perpetual confusion, our temper is ruffled with every incident that comes in our way, and gives us the least hindrance, and we never perform with such accuracy

or

or such success. Have we not sometimes learned these inconveniences by sad experience, and shall we ever be guilty of delays again?

Or if we consider ourselves as Christians, have we not found, that by needless delays we have lost the season of morning prayer, and could never recover it again, but have past the morning without solemn addresses to the God of our lives? and hath not many a sinner felt the dreadful consequences of his delays of repentance, when day after day, and week after week, his own conscience and the voice of God in his word have called upon him to repent and return to God, and invited him to accept of pardon and peace, to receive the grace of Christ and everlasting life! What terrible agonies of soul, what reproaches of conscience on a dying bed, what horror of spirit in the review of his cursed delays! and with what tormenting despair his soul hath been hurried out of this life, and been plunged into an eternal state, without hope, or at least at a terrible uncertainty! Children, can you hear this, and not enquire betimes, "What must I do to be saved?" Can you hear this in the days of youth, and delay any longer to secure your immortal concerns, and provide for the approaching hour of death and judgment? 'Tis a dangerous thing for children in their younger years to learn the language of idleness, and to cry out on every occasion, 'Tis time enough yet. They generally grow up to feel the bitter fruits of delay. 'Tis an excellent rule in the things of earth or of heaven, "Never leave that to be done the next hour, which may properly be done now; nor dare to put off till to-morrow the business which you may as well begin to-day. Who knows what a day may bring forth?" He that hath done his work to-day is secure of peace, but
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to-morrow may be all disappointment. Let us who pretend to be Christians, or to have a regard to God and religion, let us upon the first notice of any duty make haste to the practice of it. Upon the first conviction of sin let us apply ourselves immediately to God for pardoning and sanctifying grace: Let us return to our duty with early diligence like David, "as soon as thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart replied, Thy face will I seek. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments," Psal. xxvii. 8. and cxix. 60.

3. Diligence implies activity and vigour, in opposition to sloth and laziness, languor and indifference. 'Tis not lazy wishes that will perform work or obtain a blessing. "The sluggard doth fireth and hath nothing," therefore the wise man advises, Eccl. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might:" then it is likely to be finished in proper season; but the slothful wretch makes no riddance of his work, he moves heavily in his business, just as he doth on his bed, "like a door upon its hinges," and never gets forwards, Prov. xxvi. 24. A beautiful simile indeed, nor is the description of the sluggard less elegant, ver. 25. "When he hath hid his hand in his bosom, it grieves him to bring it to his mouth."

And what poor work doth a Christian make who is cold, indifferent, slothful, and lazy in the things which concern his soul and salvation! He makes a pretence to religion, but how poorly doth he proceed in it who hath no activity, no vigor, no fervency therein? Where he was last year, there he is now, or else gone farther backward: His sins are still as unmortified, his temptations still as powerful and prevailing, his hopes still as low, and his holiness as much interrupted as in years past:
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He was not fit to appear before God then, and he is no fitter now: he was then in terror at the thoughts of dying, and he is still in the same terror. The slothful Christian, upon examination, finds his faith hath scarce improved one grain, he is no nearer salvation than when at first he believed. Is this the obedience we owe to the command of Christ, Luke xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life?" John vi. 27. Regard the advice of the blessed apostle, Rom. xii. 11. "Be ye not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Permit me to ask the lazy Christians of our present age, Is this an imitation of ancient saints, who laboured night and day to get nearer to heaven, and as it were took the kingdom of heaven by an holy violence? Let us bestir ourselves then, and shake off this lethargy of soul, this dull humour, let us call up all our natural and Christian powers into exercise, and be no longer "slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 11.

4. True diligence implies also watchfulness, in opposition to a drowsy heedless temper, a thoughtless security of soul. We must be awake to seize all advantages for our work, as well as to guard against surprises and dangers. How dreadfully is the sluggard exposed to loss and ruin! If the sailors sleep in their voyage, they run upon sands and rocks, and lose their ship and their lives. If a centinel sleep in his watch-tower, the enemy gains considerable advantage, and seizes some post of importance, or enters the gates of the city. How often hath a whole army been surprized and routed, who lay secure in their camp and kept no due watch! We Christians are soldiers under the banner

ner of Christ, our enemies are many within and without; our great adversary the devil is malicious and busy: if we indulge security and drowsiness, he seizes every unguarded hour to wound and defile and distress our souls. Therefore the apostle Peter demands our watchfulness, 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant," or watchful, "for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." One unwatchful hour, one slumber in the day of temptation hath given Satan opportunity for unknown mischief, and administered matter to a Christian for bitter repentance all his days. Shall we then ever hearken to the enticements of slothful nature? Shall we ever gratify the tempter at this rate to our own certain loss, and to the danger of our eternal ruin?

5. Diligence yet further implies a constancy in our work, in opposition to looking back, and perpetual avocation by diversions and pleasures. The foolish Israelites were often looking back to the leeks and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt, and were in danger of losing the promised land. Where love of pleasure and diversion often interrupts the business we are engaged in, we shall make but poor broken work, and have little hope to succeed in it, Prov. xxi. 17. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man."

And as they can never grow rich in temporal things who are carried away from their business by every diversion, so neither can a Christian grow rich in grace, who frequently interrupts his duty to indulge mirth and carnal delights. We must be steadfast and constant in our Christian race, and not turn aside from the path of duty to gather this and the other flower of sensual pleasure,
if

if we would finish our course with joy, and so run as to obtain the prize.

6. Another thing implied in true diligence, is firmness and resolution in our labour in opposition to all the difficulties which attend our work. We suppose every valuable and excellent design hath some difficulties more or less always attending it; some hardship which must be endured, some obstacles and impediments which must be broke through; but if we are frightened at every shadow of difficulty, we shall never fulfil our service, nor perfect our design. This Solomon hath often observed: The sluggard cries, 'Tis cold, and will not go early to plough, and therefore "he shall "beg in harvest, and have nothing." He complains, "there is a lion in the way, there is a lion "in that street," where the path of duty lies; therefore he sits down in sloth, and keeps himself safe and idle at home. "The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns," he imagines every step he takes in the path of diligence and industry hath such troubles attending it, such thorns and briars, as he calls them, that he cannot break through, and therefore he refuses to labour. See Prov. xx. 4. and xxvi. 13. and xxv. 19.

And is not this matter the same in spiritual things? How many are there who cry out of the ways of religion as painful and hard? They are frightened at the duty of repentance, self-denial, and mortification of sin, at cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes; they are offended: persecution, which sometimes rises against godliness; the frowns of the world terrify their hearts, they dare not be singular in the profession of faith, or the practice of virtue: They are ashamed of the worship and the name of God in the midst of profane and sinful men; they go back, as some

disciples did in the days of Christ, and walk no longer with him : but let us remember the divine threatning, " The man who hath put his hand to " the plough, and looks back, my soul," saith the Lord, " shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38.

7. The last character I shall ascribe to the diligent man is, perseverance in opposition to fainting and weariness. The man of diligence must hold out to the end, if he expect to have his labour crowned. An imperfect work among men is very little worth : it is the end that crowns all.

And 'tis just the same in religion ; unless we persevere in the duties of holiness, we have no reason to expect the divine reward ; but the glorious recompense is sure to us, " if we are not weary in " well doing ; we shall reap in the due time, if we " faint not." Gal. vi. 9. St Paul just before his martyrdom rejoices in this, " he had fought the " good fight," in opposition to all the enemies of the gospel, and he had finished his course of faith and holiness : " Henceforth," saith he, " is laid " up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv.

7. Let us animate ourselves by his blessed example, and by the promise of our Lord Jesus to the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 10. " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of " life." Let these thoughts awaken our drowsy spirits, and prolong our patience in the work of the Lord, that we may not at last be found among them who draw back to perdition, but among those who believe and persevere to the saving of the soul, Heb. x. 39.

Thus far I have been engaged in setting before you the several things implied in diligence or industry, both in matters of this life and that which is to come ; but I have in some measure entered up-

on my second general head, by often touching upon the happy fruits of diligence, as well as the dismal consequences of all the contrary vices. My remaining work therefore will be very short, and that is, to mention in a more express and distinct manner, "the blessings which attend diligence in a course of virtue and goodness;" and they are such as these:

1. Diligence hath a natural tendency to success, and to obtain the good things we seek. "In all labour," saith Solomon, "there is profit," Prov. xiv. 23. "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread." Prov. xii. 11. and "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. But as for the field of the slothful, it is "overgrown with thorns; nettles and briars cover it," Prov. xxiv. 30. "And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags," Prov. xxii. 21.

'Tis the same in spiritual things as in the things of nature. Diligence in seeking the knowledge of God, shall be crowned with an increase of sacred knowledge, Hos. vi. 3. "Then shall we know the Lord, if we follow on to know him." Give attendance to reading, saith Paul to Timothy, "that thy profiting may appear to all," 1 Tim. iv. 14. Diligence and labour with our own hearts in weaning them from the world, and a fervent constancy in the pursuits of godliness, is the proper and rational way to obtain the blessings of grace and glory. But I add,

2. Diligence hath the rich and special promises of a faithful God to encourage its hope. What David said to his son Solomon, with regard to building the temple, the gospel saith the same to every Christian, 1 Chron. xxii. 16. "Arise, and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee:" And Solomon gave the same advice to his son,

and the same promise, Prov. ii. 3, 4. "If thou
 "seekest after wisdom as silver, and searchest for
 "her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou obtain
 "saving knowledge, and learn the fear of the
 "Lord." Give all diligence, saith Peter in the
 name of Christ, 2 Pet. i. 5—10. "Give all dili-
 "gence, and add" one Christian grace to another,
 "add to your faith virtue, to your virtue tem-
 "perance, patience, godliness, and charity. Give
 "diligence again to make your calling and your
 "election sure; for if you do these things ye shall
 "never fall, but an entrance shall be minister-
 "ed to you abundantly into the everlasting king-
 "dom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

3. Diligence and industry are a happy guard against snares and temptations of every kind. When the devil finds you idle, he hath a proper moment to assault you with some powerful temptation: He will employ you in his work, when he finds your hands and hearts entirely at leisure and unemployed; he that is not awake to his duty, is not awake to his danger, and is easily surprised into mischief; but the wakeful diligent Christian is like Nehemiah's builders on the walls of Jerusalem, with a weapon in one hand, while they laboured with the other; and thus their work went on with good success and safety.

4. Diligence is always making a progress towards its designed end, but the slothful man is in great danger of going backward. The gardener who neglects his daily work, will find the ground which he hath cultivated overrun with weeds again in a little time. If a waterman who rows against the stream be slothful and drowsy, his vessel will make no progress, but be carried backward continually: so if a labourer hearkens to the enticements of drowsy nature, and learns this slothful language,

"A little

“ A little more sleep, a little more slumber, poverty will come upon him as an armed man,” and rob him of all his gains. Negligent, and unwatchful and lazy Christians, will for the most part lose what they have gained in the things of religion too. The apostle John in his second epistle guards against it, “ Take heed, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.” How many have lost their first zeal, their first love, and their early joys in religion, by a sinful security of soul, and for want of a due concern to grow in grace. 'Tis growth in religion that evidences the truth of it, and secures the comforts of it.

5. The diligent Christian is a most useful person in the world, he does the most good himself, and becomes an excellent example to all that are round about him. He lays the sluggard under continual conviction, and puts him to daily shame, if he have any of his senses awake to see, or feel, or take notice. Such a Christian animates and encourages all that are near him to the same diligence, as fire kindles fire, and spreads the blaze far and near. Active and lively Christians make one another's heart warm in religion, and help to diffuse the sacred fire round about. The zealous servants of the blessed God give credit and honour to their profession; but what a shameful thing is it, to see some Christians idle and careless in the duties of their daily calling, and slothful and lazy in their practice of religion too? The truth is, they do not make religion their practice, but a mere matter of talk and sound; and while they refuse to labour in the station where God has placed them, they disgrace their profession, and expose themselves to the just and severe sentence of the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 10. “ He that will not work, let

“let him not eat,” that is, let him starve, for Christianity is no just pretence for idleness.

6. The diligent Christian “finishes his work with “peace, hope, and joy.” He shall review his conduct and his labours with an inward satisfaction, and a sacred pleasure of soul: his conscience is a joyful witness; he hath not only a safe, but an abundant entrance generally administered to him into the heavenly kingdom, and he obtains a fairer crown; for “the Lord the righteous Judge will reward every one according to “his works.” He who had one talent, and improved it, by gaining ten more, had rule over ten cities. He that gained five talents, had five cities under his government, Luke xix. 17, 19. But let us dread the curse of the wicked and slothful servant: observe, the slothful servant is pronounced wicked by the mouth of Christ himself, Matt. xxv. 26. He is to be “cast into utter “darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The slothful wretch at the end of his days, sees his great work undone, his heart not yet turned to God and godliness, and is overwhelmed with horror when in view of death and judgment. It is the cry of his soul, “O that I might die the death of the righteous!” but there is no crown of righteousness for him, no prize of glory; he hath neither run nor fought, nor laboured so as to obtain it. He wishes for heaven in vain; his desires are his torment, for they shall never be fulfilled, desire and despair are misery enough. Happy soul, who hath been faithful, diligent, and watchful in every station of life, and has made suitable advances in faith, and love, and holiness. He waits till his Lord shall come, and he rejoices in hope, for he shall then receive the glorious sentence
from

SER. XLIII. *with the Blessings of it.* 303

from the lips of his Judge, " Well done, good
" and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy
" Lord ; and be thou possessor of blessedness in
" the upper world, in proportion to the talents
" I trusted thee with on the earth, and to thy di-
" ligent and faithful improvement of every talent."
Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XLIV.

The Love of our Neighbour.

JOHN XIII. 34, 35.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

OUR blessed Master having acquainted his disciples with his approaching sufferings, while Judas, one of the twelve, was gone out to betray him, lays down this excellent direction for their future conduct; "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another;" not that it was absolutely new, for we find it amongst the laws of Moses, Levit. xix. 18. but it was so much enlarged by our Saviour, as to the object, and made such a distinguishing mark of his religion, that it may well be called a *new commandment*. I shall therefore endeavour,

I. To explain it in its several branches.

II. Enquire

II. Enquire into the objects to which it extends.

III. Consider the importance of this command.

And, IV. Recommend it by some proper motives.

First, I am to explain this command of our Saviour in its several branches; it is a comprehensive precept, and includes all the duties of the second table. The first and great command of the law, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; on these two hang all the law and the prophets." The apostle Paul has given a summary explication of the latter, under the name of Charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, &c. charity, or love, [for it is the same word in the original] "suffers long, and is kind—, it envieth not—, it vaunteth not itself—, it is not puffed up, nor behaves itself unseemly—. It seeketh not its own—, it is not easily provoked—, it thinketh no evil—, it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—, it beareth all things—, it believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things."

To love our neighbour therefore, is to think well of him; not to be jealous of his behaviour, not to indulge suspicions without sufficient proof, but to put the best construction on his words and actions. "Love thinketh no evil,"

ο λογισζειται κακον, it does not reason out evil, nor charge it upon his neighbour by inference or innuendo, but wishes his welfare, and rejoiceth in it: envy is the effect of hatred and ill-will, but love unites the affections of men, by smoothing their tempers, and

calming the boisterous and turbulent passions of the mind.

Again, To love our neighbour, is to speak well of him, and give him the best character we can, by covering his infirmities and failings. We are forbid not only to speak evil of dignities, but of "one another," James iv. 11. We should not speak evil of our neighbour, though what we say is true, without some necessary occasion; much less should we spread reports to his prejudice, if they are false, or uncertain. "Love covereth all sins," (says the wise man) Prov. x. 12. it conceals them as far as it can with prudence and honesty; it forgives injuries, and is ready to impute miscarriages rather to the inadvertency or surprise of temptation, than to premeditated malice and wickedness.

Further, Love to our neighbour will dispose us to do him all the good offices we can, by counsel, by advice, and by communicating to his necessities upon proper occasions. Christian love opens both the hand and heart: "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, nevertheless you give them not those things which are needful for the body, what does it profit?" The injunction of our text requires us to be as really serviceable to our neighbour as we can, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. In one word, to love our neighbour is to shew him all possible kindness, and to do by him as we wish he would do by us in the like circumstances.

Secondly, We are to enquire into the objects to which this precept extends; for though we are to bear an universal good-will to all men, wishing and praying

praying for their welfare as sincerely as for our own, yet the outward expressions of our love must vary according to the circumstances and relations of persons and things; cases of extremity are to take place of all other obligations, nearness of relation may challenge the next place; the public good of a whole nation is to be preferred to that of a single person, and then the household of faith, and gratitude for benefits received, are to be peculiarly considered. To descend to some particulars.

1. We are to shew kindness to strangers. This was expressly commanded by Moses, "Love ye therefore the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," Deut. x. 19. and it is strongly enforced in the New Testament; our blessed Lord commends the good and faithful servant for receiving strangers, Matt. xxv. 35, &c. It was the custom in ancient times, to take strangers into their houses, and to provide necessaries for man and beast; but this being impracticable and unsafe in populous towns and cities; we may shew our compassionate regards to them by our methods of relief and assistance. And among strangers, those deserve a more particular regard, who have been banished their country, and forsaken their kindred and father's house, for the sake of religion and a good conscience. This was a common case in the primitive times, and has been the lot of great numbers of foreign protestants in the present age; such a carriage towards them is therefore recommended in most of the epistles written to the churches that were scattered abroad: "Let brotherly love continue," (says one apostle) "and be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Beloved," (says the apostle) "thou dost faithfully

“ fully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and
 “ to strangers, whom if thou bring forward on
 “ their journey, thou shalt do well.”

2. We are to express our Christian love and respects to our neighbours and friends in affliction; if they are poor we should contribute to their relief, according to our abilities; if they are sick, we should visit them, if it be proper; or at least assist them by our advice and prayers; for “ pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widow in affliction.” Job was a remarkable example of this kind of love, “ If I have withheld the poor from their desire,” (says he) “ or have caused the eye of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten thereof: “ If I have seen any perish for want of cloathing, “ or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, then let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and my arm be broken from the bone,” Job xxxi. 16. &c. If our neighbours or friends are not in distress, we are then to express our love to them by a courteous and affable behaviour at all times, by a readiness to consult their reputation and good name on proper occasions, by discountenancing all backbitings and whisperings to their prejudice, and by warning them of any impending dangers they may not be aware of.

3. We are to love our relations and kindred; those that are of one family and blood should be of one heart and soul; children should love and honour their parents, as parents cannot but have a natural care and tenderness for their children. Brothers and sisters should be ready and forward to do all kind of offices for each other; diligently avoid.

avoiding all jealousies and misunderstandings, as well as all just occasions of offence; they should behave with all kindness and affection, and be studious to support each other's character and reputation in the world. Happy are those families where brothers and sisters dwell together after this manner! but the precept in our text extends further, even to those who are related as Christians; for our Saviour was now speaking to such; and he makes their benevolence to each other the very badge and mark of their discipleship: The church of Christ is his body; and as the members of the body have a natural sympathy for each other, and severally contribute to the welfare of the whole; so should all the members of Christ, for "there is but one body and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling; therefore" (says the apostle) "let us forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. iv. 1, &c. Distinctions and differences of a lower nature should make no breach of affection; Christians should bear with each other's infirmities, and endeavour to be at peace among themselves, even where they can't be of the same mind. This is more especially the duty of members of the same Christian society, who as they are brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, are obliged by all the ties of nature and grace, as well as the express command of their Lord and Master, to avoid all occasions of strife, and to promote the welfare of the whole community: "We exhort you brethren" (says the apostle to the church of the Thessalonians) "that ye warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men, see that none render evil

“evil for evil to any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and all men,” 1 Thess. v. 14. The communion of saints should be a communion of love; happy are those churches that abound in this grace! the God of love and peace will be with them.

4. We are to love our native country, and to consult the public welfare, as long as we continue members of this society; for as the end of civil government is the protection and defence of every individual, so every subject should contribute his part to the safety of the whole; for this purpose we are exhorted to honour the king, to be obedient to magistrates, and to observe the laws of our country, making supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. If our country should be invaded by a foreign enemy, or our legal rights and privileges endangered by domestic foes, it is our duty to contribute our best assistances, and even to hazard our lives in defence of them. It was reckoned in ancient times an honour to die for one's country, and certainly next to the service of true religion, we cannot appear in a more glorious cause. In times of public danger, every man should be a soldier, or contribute his utmost to the public safety, by discovering all plots and conspiracies, and by discountenancing those that speak evil of dignities; for these things tend to divide a kingdom against itself, and to alienate the affections of subjects from their Sovereign, who, as long as he governs according to law, ought to have the hearts as well as the obedience of his people.

5. Christianity teaches us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us; if we love
love

love them only that love us, what reward have we? and if we salute our brethren only, what do we more than others? We love our enemies, when we pray that God would bring them to repentance, and forgive their sins; and when, instead of avenging ourselves, we manifest a generous concern for their welfare. Thus, when our Saviour was breathing out his last upon the cross, he prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and when the Jews were stoning of St Stephen, "he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge." The scribes and Pharisees, who were interpreters of the law, taught the people to love their neighbours, but to hate their enemies, John v. 43. But Christianity breathes a nobler spirit, by teaching us, that if our enemy hunger, we should feed him; and if he thirst, we should give him drink; for by so doing, we shall heap coals of fire on his head, Rom. xii. 19, 20. However, this precept of loving our enemies, must be understood in consistency with self-defence, and with the use of all lawful means, to put it out of their power to hurt us; for though we are not to avenge ourselves, nor carry our resentments to an unreasonable length, we may nevertheless kill our enemies in a just war, or pursue them till they are brought to reason: the duty of loving our enemies chiefly regards private and personal injuries; in such cases we are not to give place to wrath, nor take the prerogative of God out of his hand, who has said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it." The example of our blessed Saviour, with regard to personal injuries, is highly worthy the imitation of all his disciples, who though he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet when he was reviled, he reviled not again, and when he suf-
fered

ferred he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

Thirdly, We proceed to consider the importance of this precept, which is the peculiar commandment of Christ, and is often recommended as a principal part of his religion; it is the command of God the Father, that we would believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another; and it is the message (says the apostle John) that we heard from the beginning, and is urged as one of the greatest and most distinguishing doctrines of the gospel.

1. It is the proper mark of our discipleship to Christ. "By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." The different sects among the Jews and philosophers had usually some peculiar character or motto by which they were distinguished, in allusion to whom our Saviour assumed this in my text, which is the image of God in the soul of man; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God: there is a natural enmity in the hearts of all men against each other, since the degeneracy of our first parents; they are foolish and disobedient, being in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, but Christianity changes our dispositions, and recovers us to a divine and godlike temper: by this we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

2. This is the substance of all moral duties; the apostle calls it the "end of the commandment," or, according to the original, the end of the gospel declaration [*τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας*] one design of our Saviour's doctrine was to subdue those unruly lusts and passions in the hearts of men, which for many ages had produced the most cruel and unnatural contentions;

tions ; and to restore peace, and love, and harmony among them ; the gospel is therefore called the gospel of peace, and all its precepts have a tendency to promote this heavenly temper of mind ; and even faith itself is dead and lifeless, unless it work by love : love is the fulfilment of the whole law, especially of that part of it that respects our neighbour, according to the apostle, who exhorts the believing Romans, “ to owe no man any thing, “ but to love one another ; for he that loveth another (says he) has fulfilled the law : for this, “ Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not “ kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false “ witness, thou shalt not covet ; and if there be “ any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his “ neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the “ whole law,” Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10.

3. No religious duty is acceptable to God without love. This is the incense that must perfume all our spiritual sacrifices ;, for God will not hear the prayers of them that live in malice, hatred, or uncharitableness : “ If ye forgive not men their “ trespasses, neither will your Father forgive “ your trespasses,” Matt. vi. 15. Nay, “ if “ thou rememberest that thy brother has aught against thee, (says our blessed Saviour) “ leave thy “ gift before the altar, first be reconciled to thy “ brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

No endowments and qualifications of nature, no pretended zeal for the doctrines of religion will atone for the want of charity and love. “ If we “ could speak with the tongues of men and angels, “ and have not charity, we are but like a sounding “ brass or tinkling cymbal ; though we have the “ gift of prophecy, and understand all mystery and

“ all knowledge, and though we have faith so
 “ as to remove mountains, and have not charity
 “ or love to our neighbour, we are nothing : Nay,
 “ though we bestow all our goods to the poor,
 “ and give our bodies to be burned, and have not
 “ charity, we are nothing.”

4. Love to one another will prevent a multitude of sins. Proud men usually despise their inferiors, and look down upon them with contempt, as if they were not made of the same clay, or were not subject to the same laws of humanity ; whereas brotherly love teaches us to prefer others in honour before ourselves, Rom. xii. 10. The envious man bears ill-will to his neighbour, he looks upon his prosperity with regret, and secretly detracts from his reputation and good name ; but love rejoices in his neighbour's welfare, and is ready to join with him in thankfulness for the distinguishing blessings that divine providence has bestowed upon him. Malice and revenge are tumultuous passions, and the springs not only of evil thoughts, but of all manner of wickedness ; the barbarous nations which have not the advantage of the gospel are full of the habitations of cruelty, unfociable, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful : but where Christianity prevails, the people, in proportion to the practice of this divine precept in our text, are kindly affectionated one to another. The gospel forbids all kinds of malice and private revenge, as inconsistent with our duty to God, and to one another. “ Dearly beloved, avenge not
 “ yourselves,” (says the apostle) “ but rather
 “ give place to wrath : for it is written, Vengeance
 “ is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,” Rom. xii. 19. When we see men carried away by a swell of anger and passionate expressions, it is better to give way to the torrent, than by an unseasonable

seasonable opposition to make it rage the more: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." Our Saviour was himself a perfect pattern of this meek and lovely temper, and he recommends it earnestly to his disciples, Matt. v. 39, &c. "I say to you, Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."——

In a word, the greater regard we pay to this divine precept, the less subject shall we be to our own unruly passions, and the more shall we delight in the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and temperance, against which there is no law."

Fourthly, We come, in the last place to recommend the love of our neighbour by some proper motives. And,

1. It is an excellent and godlike temper of mind: for God is love, and the expressions of his goodness are conspicuous over all the works of his hands, and more especially over his intelligent creatures: even the worst of men partake of the bounties of his providence, for he does them good, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness: He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living creature. The goodness of God has provided not only for the temporal, but for the eternal happiness of mankind, by contriving a method for their redemption from hell, and by sending his Son into the world to accomplish it. Now if this character of the Divine Being render him the object of our esteem and affection, let us cultivate the like disposition in ourselves; for it is the glory of the creature

to be like God, especially in this most agreeable perfection of his nature. Are the expressions of the divine love to us so many and various? let us imitate them in our behaviour to others, by doing them all the good we can. Do we wish that our acquaintance and neighbours should love us? let us provoke them to it by our agreeable conduct: love is the band of all society, without which there can be no pleasure in conversation, nor any confidence among friends: most of the quarrels and contentions among men arise from the want of this divine temper; but love thinketh no evil; and therefore when we come to heaven, all jealousies will be at an end, and the imperfection of the present state will be swallowed up in everlasting love.

2. This divine temper is further commended to us by the example of our blessed Lord in the text, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The incarnation of Christ, attended with mean and servile circumstances; his whole life, and the bitter agonies of his death for the salvation of mankind, are the greatest instances of love that were ever known. There is hardly so much love to be found among friends, as for one man to lay down his life for another; and yet when we were enemies, Christ died for us, he died for the ungodly, even for the chief of sinners. How peculiar was his love to his disciples and followers, whom he instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and distinguished by the extraordinary gifts of his Holy Spirit! Having loved his own, (says the evangelist) he loved them even to the end: when his enemies came to apprehend him, he desired that his disciples might go their way, so solicitous was he for their preservation. The like affection he

is now expressing towards his church in his exalted state, by interceding for it, and communicating all necessary supplies of grace and assistance to his members under their present difficulties. Now though it is impossible that Christians should love one another to the same degree as Christ has loved them, yet they should copy after this great example, and be followers of him who spent his whole life in acts of goodness and charity to the souls and bodies of men. They should press toward this mark, and "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and envy, and evil speaking, should endeavour that their love to each other may abound more and more in all knowledge and judgment."

3. This is the spirit and genius of the gospel. It runs through all the sermons of our Saviour, and is inculcated almost in every page of the New Testament; the epistles of St John breathe nothing but love to God and our neighbour; and the primitive Christians were so remarkable for the exercise of this generous disposition, that it was a proverb among the heathens, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" They visited their brethren in prison with the hazard of their lives, and were not afraid to attend them to the stake. Even Julian the apostate, the greatest enemy that Christianity ever had, confessed that their charity extended not only to their friends, but to their very enemies. Indeed the devil, in these latter ages of the world, has robbed the church in a great measure of this part of its glory, by sowing divisions and contentions among professors about little matters, to the great hindrance of the success of the gospel; but let us watch against this evil, and even in our contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, keep in mind

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is now expressing towards his church in his exalted state, by interceding for it, and communicating all necessary supplies of grace and assistance to his members under their present difficulties. Now though it is impossible that Christians should love one another to the same degree as Christ has loved them, yet they should copy after this great example, and be followers of him who spent his whole life in acts of goodness and charity to the souls and bodies of men. They should press toward this mark, and "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and envy, and evil speaking, should endeavour that their love to each other may abound more and more in all knowledge and judgment."

3. This is the spirit and genius of the gospel. It runs through all the sermons of our Saviour, and is inculcated almost in every page of the New Testament; the epistles of St John breathe nothing but love to God and our neighbour; and the primitive Christians were so remarkable for the exercise of this generous disposition, that it was a proverb among the heathens, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" They visited their brethren in prison with the hazard of their lives, and were not afraid to attend them to the stake. Even Julian the apostate, the greatest enemy that Christianity ever had, confessed that their charity extended not only to their friends, but to their very enemies. Indeed the devil, in these latter ages of the world, has robbed the church in a great measure of this part of its glory, by sowing divisions and contentions among professors about little matters, to the great hindrance of the success of the gospel; but let us watch against this evil, and even in our contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, keep in mind

mind the apostle's exhortation, to hold the truth in love; and in meekness, to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. The gospel is not to be propagated by violence, but by the gentle methods of argument and persuasion; and our arguments will have the greater weight, if it is known and believed that we are influenced by no other motive, but a desire to recover our adversaries out of the snare of the devil, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4. This temper of mind will promote our usefulness in the world. What a blessing to a family is a parent or master, that has the welfare of his children and servants at heart, and who means nothing but their good! How acceptable are his instructions and counsels, and how useful must he be in making up any little misunderstandings that may arise among them! What a blessing to a neighbourhood is one that is ready and forward to all good offices, and how chearfully will men submit their differences to his arbitration! Love is the cement that unites the hearts of men to each other. Some persons may shew kindness to their neighbours through fear, or for worldly interest, but no obligation is so lasting as love. Happy is that prince that reigns in the hearts of his subjects; and happy that people who are united to their king and country, and to one another in love! Happy is that Christian society whose members are distinguished by their mutual affection to each other, who study to be quiet, and to avoid all occasions of offence! There will be peevish and weak brethren in all communities; but wise and prudent persons will bear with their infirmities, and rather suffer a private injury, than endanger the common peace;

peace : the beginning of strife (says Solomon) is as when one letteth out water ; wise and good men will therefore avoid it, or make it up in the best manner they can. Love covers a multitude of sins, and prevents numberless quarrels and divisions ; but when this is wanting, there will be confusion, and every evil work.

5. The advantages of this temper of mind to ourselves are very great. The prevalency of peace and love in the heart will keep out all those unruly passions which disquiet it ; such as envy, wrath, malice, revenge, jealousy, and discontent. It will give us the true possession of ourselves, and preserve a constant calm and serenity in the mind ; so that to love our neighbour is in reality to love ourselves, and to consult our own happiness. They who bear ill-will to their neighbour, must be frequently tormented with uneasy resentments of mind ; and while they are contriving mischief to others, must be themselves like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt : but christian love will free us from all these mischiefs and inconveniencies, and give new joy and delight, from the pleasure that it takes in the prosperity of his neighbour ; besides, this will gain us the good-will of others ; for every one loves a generous, kind, and good-natured man ; even his very enemies will be at peace with him ; but above all, this will secure to us the love of God, which is our chief happiness ; for if we love one another (says the apostle John) God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us, John iv. 12.

6. It will be a great comfort to us when we come to die, if we can look back upon a life spent in acts of devotion and piety to God, and of benevolence and good will to our fellow-creatures : For though we are not to depend upon the merit
of

of our good works for our acceptance with God, yet certainly they are well pleasing to him, as they are the fruits of faith, and evidence that the same mind is in us that was in Christ Jesus. If we have been eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor, the blessing of them that are ready to perish will come upon us; and if we have done it with right views, Christ will reckon it as done to himself. The worst of men in a dying day, think it of importance to forgive their enemies, and to go out of the world with expressions of love and charity to all mankind, because Christ has said, "If we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us:" not that this alone will entitle us to forgiveness, but it is a qualification of mind, without which this blessing is not to be expected; and yet after all, it will afford us but little comfort upon a death-bed, to declare that we forgive our enemies, and leave the world in charity with all mankind, if we have spent our whole life in malice, hatred, revenge, and all kinds of uncharitableness; but if we are reconciled to God by Christ in early life, and enabled to love our fellow-creatures and Christians, and do them all the good we can, according to our several abilities, we may hope to go off the stage with a quiet conscience; and with a blessed assurance of being translated to a world of perfect harmony and love.

7. Finally, the love of our neighbour is one of those articles on which our everlasting sentence will depend in the day of judgment. Next to our love to God, and faith in his Son, it will then be enquired what good fruits we have brought forth, and how we have behaved towards others in our several relations. If we have

have been heads of families, it will be asked what has been the temper of our minds towards our children and servants; or if we have lived in inferior stations, whether we have paid all due respect and honour to our superiors: as we are members of society, it will be enquired, whether we have served our generation according to the will of God, by obeying our civil governors in all things lawful and honest, by a due observation of the laws of our country, and a friendly behaviour to all mankind; the disciples of Christ are not born for themselves, but for the good of others; and if they do not improve their talents this way, it will be said they have hid them in a napkin. Let us then be careful of our behaviour towards our neighbours, and earnestly pray that God would kindle within us this divine flame of love and benevolence to all mankind; that the turbulent and unruly passions of malice, hatred, revenge, and ill-will, even to the worst of men, may no longer burn in our breasts, but that our love may be without dissimulation. Let us love our relations and friends, and shew kindness to strangers; let us love our country, pray for our enemies, and do as much good to all men as we can: and then when the Son of man shall come in his glory with all his holy angels with him, and shall gather before him all nations, separating the sheep from the goats, he will place our peaceful and charitable souls on his right hand, and say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me;

"I was in prison, and ye came to me:" and tho' you may justly renounce all claim to merit on this account, yet will your Saviour receive you into his heavenly kingdom with the tenderest affections, for this very reason, amongst others, "in as much as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

SERMON

SERMON XLV.

Justice, Honesty, Truth and Sincerity.

PSALM XXV. 21.

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.—

INTEGRITY and uprightness are terms of like import, and signify a virtue that is essential to all true religion and morality. It may be considered as an excellent grace of itself, or as a common ingredient in every other grace and duty ; it is necessary to the regularity of our temper and conduct in all that we have to do with God and our fellow-creatures ; and is, in a word, our “ having a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man,” Acts xxiv. 16.

This has had a place in some former discourses, as it is concerned in our dealing with God ; we are now to consider it as it relates to our dealing with men. And this is the view in which the Psalmist seems more especially to speak of it in our text ; where, reflecting on the injuries he suffered, or was in danger of from his enemies, “ who hated him

“ with cruel hatred,” he puts up this prayer to God, “ Let integrity and uprightness preserve me:”
 “ as if he should say, “ Let them keep me from do-
 “ ing or suffering any wrong ; let my heart be in-
 “ fluenced by thy grace to behave with uprightness
 “ and integrity towards others, however they be-
 “ have toward me ; and let thy providence guard
 “ mine innocence, that I may not suffer by any of
 “ their unrighteous contrivances and practices a-
 “ gainst me.”

In treating on this subject, I would, with humble dependence on divine aid,

I. Consider the nature of integrity or uprightness in our dealings with men.

II. Recommend it. And then conclude with two or three reflections for a due improvement of the whole.

I. Consider the nature of integrity or uprightness in our dealing with men.

It is in general a right disposition of soul, which governs the thoughts of our hearts, and expresses itself in correspondent words and actions towards all men, as in the sight of God : to draw out this short account of integrity in the easiest method, it may be best to consider it, first, with respect to our actions, and then, with respect to our words, and, last of all, with respect to the temper of our spirits.

1. With respect to our actions ; and so it may be taken for justice and honesty, in opposition to injuring and cheating.

An upright man dares not design and do an injurious thing to others ; his integrity disposes him to act with impartial justice toward every one, and not to be biased by hopes or fears, personal respects or prejudices, worldly advantages or inconveniences ; but to “ do that which is right in the

“ fight

“ fight of the Lord,” Deut. xxi. 19. Upright magistrates will, according to the design of God in the institution of civil government, execute their office for the “ punishment of evil doers, and for “ the praise of them that do well,” 1 Pet. ii. 14. Upright subjects will support and defend the good government which protects them, and will “ render to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is “ due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom “ fear, honour to whom honour,” Rom. xiii. 7. And upright citizens or neighbours will labour to do justice to every one’s person, property, and character, according to the concern they have with them in every situation of life. The upright man will neither betray the innocent, nor justify the guilty, nor injure the reputation of his neighbour ; nor will he use extortion and oppression, cruelty and violence ; but whatsoever he would, or might expect, that others should do to him, the same will he do to them. The Psalmist’s beautiful description of him is, that he “ walketh uprightly, and worketh “ righteousness, he backbiteth not with his tongue, “ nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor takes up a “ reproach against his neighbour, he putteth not “ out his money to usury,” *i. e.* by way of biting extortion, “ nor taketh reward against the innocent,” Psal. xv. 2, 3, 5. He is a just and honest man, in opposition to every way of injuring or cheating.

False balances, weights, or measures, every one knows are an abomination to the Lord : pilfering and stealing in a clandestine way, and robberies by open violence, are readily allowed to be transgressions of the law of God, which says, “ Thou shalt “ not steal.” But there are many other instances of injustice and dishonesty besides these, such as breaking contracts, trusts, and promises, and withholding
from

from others their due, Col. iii. 22 --25, and iv. 1. and Tit. ii. 9. 10. Masters must not keep back the hire of their servants; nor servants defraud their masters of their goods, their time, their labour, and care; conscience should be made of standing to our bargains, and promises should be faithfully performed; the upright man "speaks the truth in his heart, and though he swears to his own hurt, he changeth not, Psal. xv. 2, 4.

'Tis very dishonest to borrow money or goods, or to trade upon credit, without upright designs, and fair prospects of paying every one his own, and without endeavouring to do it as soon as by agreement it becomes his due: "The wicked borrows, and pays not again," Psal. xxxii. 21. whereas it is the care of the righteous to "owe no man any thing, but to love one another," Rom. xiii. 8. And as we are by the law of Christ, and by the rightful demands of the government which protects us, to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, I don't see how it consists with justice to run goods, or to buy them when known to be run. This is a fraudulent method of getting them, and the injury grows when they are afterwards disposed of again, under the market price, to the detriment of the fair dealer. To add no more under this head, I cannot understand the honesty of a trader's recommending or disparaging goods upon sale, beyond his own judgment, that he may either sell them for more, or buy them for less than their worth; or of his imposing upon the ignorance, the credulity, or the necessity of others, or of making a friend, who confides in him, pay more than a stranger, who would dispute the price: "Let no man," says the apostle, "defraud or go beyond his brother in any matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such," 2 Thess. iv. 6. And the upright

upright man can say with the same apostle, "We trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly," Heb. xiii. 18. But,

2. Integrity, with respect to our words, may be taken for truth, in opposition to lying.

Integrity requires our paying a strict regard to truth, and never telling a lye on any occasion whatsoever. But to understand the nature of a lye, and prevent mistakes about it, there are several distinctions to be attended to.

We must distinguish between a proper and figurative way of speaking: the last of these is no lye, tho' it may not be literally true; but to preserve the truth of this sort of speech, it should carry such an air of the figurative strain, as may enable the hearers to discern it to be of that kind: such are the ironies and hyperboles, and other like figures of speech used in scripture.

We must likewise distinguish between speaking the whole truth, and speaking nothing but the truth. We are not at all times obliged to the first, but are always obliged to the last. And this distinction clears Samuel from a lye, when "he said to the elders of Bethlehem, I come to sacrifice to the Lord," 1 Sam. xvi. 5. tho' he likewise went thither to anoint David to the kingdom. It may likewise clear the Egyptian midwives, when they said to Pharaoh, that the Hebrew women were more quick and lively in their delivery than the Egyptians, Exod. i. 19. which by the special providence of God might be true. And perhaps it may clear Abraham and Isaac, when, according to the language of those days, they said of their respective wives that they were their sisters, Gen. xx. 12. and xxvi. 7. All these spake the truth, but not the whole truth, which in their several circumstances

cumstances we may suppose they were not obliged to do.

Again, we must distinguish between one's altering his mind and his conduct, after he has declared what he intended to do, and his speaking contrary to the intent of his mind, according to the state of things at the time of his speaking: The first of these is lawful, provided there be good reasons for it, and none be injured by it; but the second is unlawful. And this will account for the conduct of the angels at Sodom, in going into Lot's house, upon his bringing them to it, after they had said they would "abide in the street all night," Gen. xix. 2, 3. It will likewise account for our Lord's staying with the disciples at Emmaus, upon their constraining him, after he had given intimations "as tho' he would have gone further," Luke xxiv. 28, 29. Importunity, in both these cases, seems to have been the circumstances upon which they were prevailed on to do what without that importunity they designed not to have done.

Once more, we must distinguish between speaking through ignorance or mistake, what in fact may be false, and speaking a known falsehood: the immorality of falsehood does not consist in unavoidable ignorance and mistake, but in knowing or thinking one thing, and speaking another, with an intent to deceive; and herein consists the formality of a lye. Upon the whole then, we may conclude, that all assertions contrary to the sense of our own minds, and all equivocations, and mental reservations, contrary to the common plain sense of our words, and that with a design to deceive the hearer, and make him believe that we really think as we say, is inconsistent with integrity, and has the nature of a lye. Now there are various sorts of lies; which the upright man will guard against.

(1.) Some

(1.) Some are called ludicrous lies. These are such as are brought into jests and stories, and turns of wit, without any marks to distinguish them from truth: and how many are there who will sacrifice so sacred a thing as truth, rather than balk their humour, spoil their story, or lose their jest! But “as a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?” Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. He makes a jest of truth, contracts a habit of lying without remorse, imposes upon the company, defiles their minds, and teaches them to tell lies in earnest.

(2.) There is another sort, which are called *officious* lies. These are told to excuse or hide a fault, or to prevent some mischief, or to get some advantage to one’s self or others. But a lie to excuse or hide a fault, is in God’s account the highest aggravation of it, and lays it more directly open to his avenging eye; and to tell a lie to prevent any mischief, or to get any advantage to ourselves or others, is to do ourselves more harm than it can be supposed to do us or them good. Peter sinned grievously by “denying that he knew his Lord,” Luke xxii. 57. though he did it to save himself from sufferings or death: so did Sarah, when she “denied that she laughed,” Gen. xviii. 15. because she was afraid of the angel’s resentment: so did Jacob, when, to obtain his father’s blessing, he said, “I am Esau thy first-born,” chap. xxvii. 19. And so did Rahab, who, when she had hid the spies, told the searchers after them, that “they were gone out of the city,” Josh. ii. 4, 5. This was certainly a very criminal falsehood, and the apostle did by no means commend her for this, but only for her faith in the God of Israel, and for her charity toward these spies in receiving them, when he said,

“ By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace,” Heb. xi. 31. But it is utterly unjustifiable to tell a lie, though it were to save another’s, or even one’s own life; for we “ must not do evil that good may come,” Rom. iii. 8. And were any one to go about to save his own life by telling a lie, if he should fail in the attempt, and die with the lie in his mouth, with what face could he think of going immediately to answer for it to the great God of truth at his awful tribunal? Nor are we to lie even for God himself; his cause don’t need it, it would be disgraced by it, and his purity abhors it: all pious frauds are abominable in his sight. “ Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him, shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?” Job xiii. 7, 11. But,

(3.) There is still a more aggravated sort of lying, which is called the *injurious* or *pernicious* lie. This is when it is used to blast the reputation, to hinder the usefulness, to sink the credit, to injure the trade, to infringe the liberty or property, or to endanger the lives of others. This is a lie of the most complicated guilt; it is as directly against the law of love and goodness, justice and honesty, as against the law of truth. And when any of these sorts of lying are not only used in common conversation, but are carried into courts of judicature in depositions by way of evidence, under the sanction of a solemn oath, this makes their guilt the most flagrant that the nature of the crime can admit of. Hence God has entered the plainest protest against it saying, “ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,” Exodus xx. 16. and, “ thou shalt not forswear thyself,” Matt. v. 33. And he must be the most abandoned wretch who will

will venture to break these commands. "A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness will utter lies," Prov. xiv. 5.

But as no degrees of sin are allowable, so all manner of lying is a breach upon integrity and uprightness; and if we profess to have learned Christ, and to be "renewed in the spirit of our minds," and to have "put on the new man," which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, we are to put away all lying, and "to speak every man truth with his neighbour," Ephes. iv. 20, 23, 24, 25. This leads us to the next branch of integrity or uprightness; therefore,

3. With respect to the temper of our spirits, it may be taken for sincerity, in opposition to hypocrisy.

In this view of integrity, it is entirely an inward thing, it is "truth in the inward part," Psal. li. 6. and singleness of heart, as fearing God, in opposition to "eye-service as men-pleasers," Col. iii. 22. An upright man is all of a piece, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no allowed, no prevailing guile: He is sincere in the thoughts and designs of his heart; he is afraid of every wrong bias, and carefully watches against it; he would have his aims and ends to be single, and labours against every thing that might prevent them; he fain would be all that he should be, and not deceive himself or others, but be always just what he professes and seems to be, toward God and man. He is not a double-minded man, he has not a double heart or a double tongue, speaking one thing and meaning another, and he abhors flattering lips; much less would he put on specious appearances of esteem and friendship to others, with a design to ensnare them, as the Scribes and Pharisees did to our Lord, when

they complimented him, and put captious questions by which they sought to ruin him, Mark xiv. 12. and as Judas betrayed him, when he said, "Hail, master, and kissed him," Matt. xxvi. 49. This is speaking lyes in hypocrisy, with a fair shew of friendship, or of sanctity, to make the deceit the less suspected; this is a great part of that leaven of the Pharisees which Christ so much cautioned his disciples against, Luke xii. 1. and the apostle exhorts Christians to "lay aside all guile and hypocrisy," 1 Pet. ii. 1.

The upright man acts with a conscience toward God, as in his sight, and would be in heart and life exactly what his word requires him to be; he would not walk in masquerade, nor say or do any thing to induce himself, or others, to think more highly of him than is meet; he desires to be better than he appears to be, instead of appearing to be better than he is: he is sincerely just, honest, and true, he designs and endeavours to be so in all relations and trusts, and in every thing he has to do; he is a sincere neighbour, and friend, sincere in his professions and engagements of friendship and love, and sincere in pursuing them; and by acting up to them he proves the "sincerity of his love," 2 Cor. viii. 8. He is sincere in his professions of religion, he believes what he says, and honestly labours to promote and practise what he professes to believe: And he is sincerely conscientious in all this, acting from a sense of duty, and so is the same alone as in company, in secret intentions, as in outward action, because he is always open to God's eye: Hence the apostle could say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world,"

“ world,” 2 Cor. i. 12. “ And our exhortation
“ was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in
“ guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put
“ in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as
“ pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts ;
“ for neither at any time used we flattering words,
“ as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is
“ witness : Nor of men sought we glory,” 1 Theff.
ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. O lovely character ! This calls us
to the second thing proposed, and that is to,

II. Recommend this integrity.

What has been offered in explaining it, one
would think should be sufficient of itself to engage
our high esteem of it, and our earnest pursuit after
it. Who would not wish to be such an upright
man, as we have been describing ? and yet, alas !
how little is integrity regarded and cultivated in
our apostate world ? and how concerned should
we be to have it deeply impressed upon our minds,
that we may not be satisfied without it ? Give
me leave then to add a few considerations further
to recommend it, in hopes that God, by his grace,
may set them home upon our hearts, to make us
upright before him. Therefore,

1. There is a native beauty in integrity and up-
rightness.

It becomes the man and the Christian ; it is a
return to our primitive rectitude, and answers the
design of renewing grace ; it is an imitation of
the holy God, who is true and upright, “ there is
“ no unrighteousness in him,” and of the holy
Jesus, who is the Amen, the faithful and true
Witness, and in whose mouth there was no guile.
It is a bright ornament of human nature, highly
approved of God, and venerable in the eyes of
men. How honourable, lovely, and striking
is Nathaniel’s character, “ An Israelite indeed,
“ in

“in whom is no guile!” John i. 37. And who can forbear loving a man that is strictly just and honest, faithful and sincere in all his dealings, and that will, on no consideration whatsoever, be drawn into an injurious, fraudulent, or hypocritical design, nor will either say a false, or do a dishonest thing.

But how odious in the eyes of God and all good men is the hypocrite and the liar, the oppressor and the knave! He is like his father the devil, that old deceiver, who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning. We should therefore think we hear God saying to us, as he did to his people of old, “Speak ye every man the truth to
“his neighbour, execute the judgment of truth
“and peace in your gates, and let none of you
“imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oaths, for all these are
“things that I hate, says the Lord, Zech. viii. 16, 17.

2. The reality and the honour of religion are nearly concerned in uprightness and integrity.

All religion is mockery and vain pretence without it; and to talk of devotion toward God, and of sincerity in our regards to him, and at the same time to be false and injurious to men, is to act in direct contradiction to religion itself; it is to bring a reproach upon its glorious author, and to give a very bad idea of it to the world. Hence was that smart reproof of the apostle to the Jew, “Thou
“that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God? for the
“name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles
“through you,” Rom. ii. 23, 24. With what justice and pungency might the like reproof be applied to many a professing Christian? Dost thou pretend to believe in Christ, to love and honour him,

him, to be his disciple, to practise his religion, and to expect salvation by him? and through injustice and dishonesty, lying, and hypocrisy, dishonourest thou him? How abominable and provoking, how inconsistent with character, and what an injurious reflection upon him and his religion is this! For his name is blasphemed, and his gospel despised among many through you: some turn libertines, others deists, and others atheists through you: some are encouraged and hardened in every kind of iniquity; others think there is nothing in religion, but that its professors are as deceitful in their dealings with God as they are with men; and others turn it all into ridicule, because of the wounds it receives in the house of its friends.

What serious mind would not tremble to think of indulging any behaviour, which should be the unhappy occasion of such shocking injuries to religion, and to the souls of others, and which should contract such a heavy load of guilt upon himself! O! never pretend to be sincere to God and Christ while you are insincere to men; and let not the glorious name of God, and a dear Redeemer, and so lovely a thing as Christian religion, be prostituted to cover or subserve unworthy designs, or be disgraced by unrighteous practices towards your fellow-creatures. Though more is necessary to make us real Christians than bare integrity and uprightness in our dealings with men, yet true christianity can neither appear in the world with reputation, nor subsist in any man's heart and life with reality, where this is wanting. But where this prevails upon Christian principles in persons professing godliness, religion has its proper influence upon them, it shews that they really are what they pretend to be, and puts a lustre upon their holy profession. Hence the apostle recommends "all
" good

“ good fidelity to servants, that they may adore
 “ the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things,”
 because that doctrine “ teaches us to live righte-
 “ ously,” as well as “ soberly and godly, in this
 “ present world,” Tit. ii. 10, 11, 12. And the a-
 postle Peter recommends a good conscience to all
 Christians on this consideration, that whereas their
 enemies “ speak evil of them, as evil doers, they
 “ may be ashamed that falsely accuse their good
 “ conversation in Christ,” 1 Pet. iii. 16.

3. The safety and the happiness of all society de-
 pend upon integrity and uprightness.

There is no living upon good terms with a man
 of a false heart and false tongue, or with a man
 who will lye and cheat, and injure another, as op-
 portunity offers ; he breaks the bands of social life,
 and none can ever place any trust or confidence in
 him, or ever think himself safe in his hands. The
 interests of families or other societies, whether civil
 or religious, cannot subsist with safety and comfort ;
 trade and business, and even common conversation
 cannot be carried on with peace and honour ; ene-
 mies cannot be guarded against, and friendship can-
 not be maintained without integrity : but where
 this spreads and rules, every one finds himself easy
 and safe, and all relations are filled up with satis-
 faction, reputation, and advantage. Hence David
 said, “ Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,
 “ him will I cut off ; mine eyes shall be upon the
 “ faithful of the land, that they may dwell with
 “ me : he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall
 “ serve me ; he that worketh deceit shall not dwell
 “ within my house, he that telleth lies, shall not
 “ tarry in my sight,” Psal. ci. 5, 6, 7. In a word,
 the upright man is a blessing, and the dishonest
 man is a curse where-ever he comes.

4. Integrity

4. Integrity or uprightness is of high advantage to ourselves.

It prevents abundance of guilt, and many a throbbing wound in the conscience, which a contrary temper and behaviour would subject us to; it is a peaceful frame of heart, and cuts out an easy, strait, and uniform path for the conduct of life; it screens us from the reproach and vengeance of wicked men, who seek occasions against us, and brings us into the way of God's protection, whose holy providence concerns itself for the upright. Hence David said in our text, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;" and the apostle says, "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it; for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" 1 Pet. iii. 10-13. Yea, "the just man walks in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him." Prov. xx. 7. Honesty is the best policy, even for the present world, and it is undoubtedly so for that which is to come. It will be a friendly witness to the believer of the sincerity of his piety toward God whilst he lives, and when he comes to die; and that, together with every other Christian virtue, will be owned at last with a reward of grace. Hence the Psalmist's elegant description of the man, who "shall abide in God's tabernacle, and dwell in his holy hill," begins, goes on, and ends with characters all of this sort in that forementioned Psalm. xy. O! "blessed is the man to whom

“ the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose
“ spirit there is no guile,” Psal. xxxii. 2.

But on the other hand, an insincere, unfaithful, dishonest man; a man who deals in falsehood and lies, is in the utmost danger of trouble in this world, and of misery for ever in the next: “ A false witness shall not be unpunished,
“ and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.” Prov. xix. 5. It will be his perpetual shame and punishment here, that none who know him will esteem, believe, or trust him, or care to keep him company; and his endless torment hereafter, that God will banish him his presence, will cover him with shame, and will trust him with his talents no more for ever: he loses the favour of man and of God too, he entangles and involves himself in continual perplexity, by his fraudulent schemes and management here, and exposes himself to the wrath of the great God, the avenger of all such for ever. “ Know ye not that the
“ unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of
“ God?” 1 Cor. vi. 9. The gates of the heavenly Jerusalem will be shut against him that “ loves
“ and makes a lie,” Rev. xxii. 15. And “ hypocrites and all liars shall have their part (among first-rate sinners,) in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,” Matt. xxiv. 51. and Rev. xxi. 8. It remains that we close with two or three reflections for a due improvement of this discourse.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This should give us exalted thoughts of the excellent morals of Christian religion.

Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid: or
“ shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

"bound? God forbid:" our Saviour himself was a bright example of all integrity, truth, and holiness; and the design of his doctrine is so far from giving the least encouragement or liberty of a contrary strain, that it strictly forbids even the most inward, secret, and gainful sins, and gives us an incomparably more exact and refined system of morals, than was ever before produced by the labour and study of the most celebrated legislators and moralists among the heathen.

His religion insists upon integrity and uprightness in their various branches; it demands them with the clearest evidence of divine authority; it enforces them by the most powerful sanctions and motives peculiar to itself; it exalts their principles and their views, that God in all things may be glorified; it shews us the way of obtaining the best and only effectual assistances for putting them into practice; and it leads us to the grounds of their acceptance, and of pardon for their disallowed defects, through his own propitiation and advocacy, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2. This should excite a religious care, upon Christian principles, to exceed the brightest of the Heathens in our moral conduct.

As our light and advantages are every way superior to theirs, let it never be said that any of them have outshone us, or were more upright, just, and honest men than we are. Let our better principles carry us into better practices than theirs; let us write with fairer lines, after the incomparably brighter copy, which is set us in the example of our blessed Lord, than ever was set the Heathen world; and let us make use of the higher assistances and encouragements he gives us, that we may answer the

superior obligations we are under, to shew forth the praises of his grace, in all the beauties of strict morality, beyond the utmost they could ever attain to.

In order hereunto, let us keep up strong convictions of the amiableness, importance, and necessity of integrity, and awe our souls with a sense of the all-seeing eye of God now, and of a righteous judgment to come hereafter, which will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and above all, let us see that our hearts be made upright by the renewing sanctifying work of God's Spirit within us. David was deeply sensible of his need of this, when reflecting with penitential sorrow on the great injustice and dishonesty, falsehood, and insincerity he had been guilty of, in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah, he cried out, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, "and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to "know wisdom: create in me a clean heart, O "God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psal. li. 6, 10.

As ever therefore we would be thoroughly upright before God, let us beg that he would put his new covenant fear into our hearts, that he would put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes, and that he would enable us on all occasions to say with good Nehemiah, who, reciting the unrighteous and oppressive measures of former governors, adds, "But so did not "I, because of the fear of God," Neh. v. 15. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, "honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, "if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, "think of these things: those things, which ye "have both learned and received of Christ and his "apostles,

“apostles, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.” Philip. iv. 8, 9. But,

3. “When we have done all these things which are commanded us, let us say we are unprofitable servants,” Luke xvii. 10.

Don’t let us pretend to any merit by the utmost integrity and uprightness, by all the justice, honesty, truth, and sincerity, we are capable of: for were these ever so perfect, they are no more than our duty; and the most critical exactness in our dealings with men, cannot atone for the manifold defects of self-government in other instances, and of piety toward God. And yet, alas! how short do the best of us fall in our uprightness and integrity, as well as in every other grace and duty! “In many things we offend all,” James iii. 2.

These therefore cannot be our righteousness to justify us in God’s sight, or entitle us to eternal life: but, blessed be God, we have a better righteousness than all this to trust to, a righteousness brought in by Christ, revealed in the gospel, and made over to the justification of every one that believes in Jesus. Let us therefore renounce all dependence upon our own imperfect sincerity, or any other virtue, grace, or duty whatsoever, and place it entirely upon the perfect righteousness of Christ, that we may be accepted therein, or alone on that account. And though we cannot be saved without governing integrity, yet after we have done our utmost to approve ourselves to God and man, let us continue to say with the apostle in point of justification, “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not
“having

"having mine own righteousness, which is of the
 "law, but that which is through the faith of Christ,
 "the righteousness which is of God by faith."
 Phil. iii. 8, 9.

SERMON

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SERMON XLVI.

Duties to Superiors, viz. Magistrates, Parents,
Ministers and Masters.

ROMANS XIII. 7.

*Render therefore to all men their dues, tribute to whom
tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom
fear, honour to whom honour.*

THE all-wise providence of God disposes man-
kind into various relations to one another
in this life; and a great part of their duty consists
in a right behaviour, as they stand severally related
to each other. Some are placed in a higher, others
in a lower order: those relative duties we owe to
our superiors, viz. “magistrates, parents, ministers,
“and masters” are now to be explained and en-
forced.

Let us begin, 1st, with the duties incumbent up-
on us, with respect to magistrates.

1. We ought to be subject to the higher powers,
whether they be supreme or subordinate. Such is
the state of human nature at present, as to render
magistracy

magistracy very necessary. If some were not invested with authority to make laws for the common good, and armed with power for the punishment of evil doers, there would be no security of our lives and properties; rapine and mischief would reign without controul. It is very evident therefore that it is the will of God, who has made all things wisely and well, that there should be civil government. The particular forms of this, and the persons to be entrusted with it, he has left to the choice and appointment of men; but it is agreeable to his mind that some should govern, and that they should be obeyed. The words of the apostle plainly import thus much, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. "Submit yourselves
 " to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;
 " whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto
 " governors, as unto them that are sent by him,
 " for the punishment of evil doers, and for the
 " praise of them that do well." In this sense we are to understand the apostle Paul, when shewing the reasonableness of subjection to the higher powers, he says, Rom. xiii. 1. "For there is no power but of God:" he is the fountain of all authority: "The powers that be, are ordained of God:" it is his ordinance that all nations should have their rulers: and whosoever resisteth them in the just execution of their office, "resisteth the ordinance
 " of God," ver. 2. The end of their institution is very beneficent to mankind, they are the ministers of God for good to the community; and while they are a terror not to good works, but to the evil, we are under strong obligations to yield obedience to them: what their laws forbid should be avoided by us, not merely that we may escape punishment, by falling under their displeasure, but from a sense of duty to God, ver. 5. "Wherefore ye must needs
 " be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience
 " sake."

“fake.” We find the apostle instructing Titus, Chap. iii. 1. to put those to whom he ministered in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates.

The nations of the earth had their various kinds of government, when the gospel was first preached among them, and the apostles did not attempt to unsettle any of them; they required Christians to live peaceably, and to submit to the several civil constitutions under which divine Providence had placed them. Indeed, if they enjoined any thing contrary to their religion, it was a plain case, that they “ought to obey God rather than men,” Acts v. 29.

2. Magistrates should be honoured by us. Their exalted stations entitle them to honour; and it is requisite that this should be rendered to them, in order to maintain their authority; disrespect shewed to their persons tends to weaken their power, and to hinder the good effects of their administrations. The apostle says, that they did despise government, who were “not afraid to speak evil of dignities,” 2 Pet. ii. 10. The Jews were expressly forbid to “revile the gods,” Exod. xxii. 28. that is their governors; because God delegated some of his power to them, and they might be said in some respect to represent him, they are stiled Gods in the scripture; which plainly shews that a respectful treatment is their due, and that it is a great fault to revile them. The apostle Paul, long after his conversion to christianity, thought himself bound to observe what is here prescribed, which he thus interprets, Acts xxiii. 5. “It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” We should not give entertainment to, much less should we propagate reports that are injurious to the reputation of our rulers; as we ourselves should give them honour, so we should not be wanting in our

endeavours to procure them that respect from others which is their due.

3. We should pay to our governors that tribute and custom which the law appoints. What can be more reasonable than that they should contribute with chearfulness towards the support of the government, who are protected by it in the enjoyment of their rights? Is it not very fit that those who are employed about the arduous affairs of state, who devote themselves to the service of their country, should receive from it those supplies, which may enable them to live, and appear in a manner suitable to the dignity of their places? The apostle speaking of the duty of subjects to pay tribute to their rulers, presses the performance of it with this consideration, that they are taken up with the common concerns, Rom. xiii. 6. "For this cause pay you tribute, for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." What is it ascertains the right of private persons to their estates, but the law? and does not the law give to governors as strong a title to the tribute or custom which it assigns them? nay, what is appropriated to them is for the service of the public; therefore frauds committed in this case are public injuries; their mischief is very extensive, and consequently their guilt is great.

4. We should pray for those that are in authority. We find the apostle laying a great stress upon this, 1 Tim. ii, 1, 2. "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." A good magistrate is a great blessing; and the higher his station is, the greater is his usefulness. It is very reasonable that those who

who share in the benefits of his government should give thanks for him unto God, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice; and put up fervent requests for the preservation of his life, and the success of his undertakings. A great deal depends upon the right management of rulers; the welfare of many is concerned herein: therefore we should be earnest in our addresses to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, that he would give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct; that they may use their power to restrain the vicious, and to encourage virtue and religion.

2dly, The duties of children to their parents come next under consideration. We find these expressed by the word Honour, Exod. xx. 12. "Honour thy father and thy mother." This is a precept of great consequence, and it demands a very serious attention: the apostle observes, that it is the "first commandment with promise," Eph. vi. 2. that is, the first commandment of the second table, and hath a promise annexed to it; or the first commandment with a special promise; what is subjoined to the second commandment, in order to enforce it, bears the form of a general assertion. The scripture often presses upon children the discharge of their duties to parents; and there is great reason for it. I believe it may be truly said, that if persons are undutiful to their parents, they seldom prove good in any other relation. The honour which children are required to give to their father and their mother includes in it love, reverence, obedience, and relief.

1. It is the duty of children to love their parents. God has so formed the hearts of fathers and mothers, that they have a strong affection for their offspring, which expresses itself, if they are not very unnatural, in instances without number. They

Look upon their children as very tender parts of themselves. How anxious are they for their welfare! to what dangers will they expose themselves for their safety! And should there be no return of this love? We have derived our being, under God, from our parents; we are obliged to them for many benefits: Had they not brought us up with great vigilance and care, we had either perished, or been wretched, deformed, decrepid creatures. Have they not then a strong claim to our affections? Have they taken a great deal of pains for our good, and should we not dread to provoke and grieve them? The want of love to parents was severely punished under the law of Moses, *Exod. xxi. 15.* "He that smiteth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death." We read in the seventeenth verse, that he who cursed, or wished that evil might befall them, was likewise to undergo capital punishment.

Parents need a great deal of prudence to exercise their authority over their children, so as not to provoke them to wrath, as the apostle expresses it, *Eph. vi. 4.* to behave so as to engage their affections, without a fond indulgence of them in any thing that is hurtful and vicious: but, if they have failed in their duty, it certainly becomes children to overlook as much as possible the infirmities and miscarriages of their parents; to consider the many good offices they have done for them: they should have a care of entertaining an ill opinion of them, and of suffering their hearts to be alienated from them, because they have given them correction: this should be looked upon as proceeding from the good-will and love of their parents, and designed for their benefit, unless the contrary appears in the plainest light. The wisest of men has told us, that he who "spareth his rod
" hateth

“hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes,” Prov. xiii. 24. Surely then it can be no good excuse to a son for not loving his father, that he hath used his rod.

2. It is the duty of children to reverence their parents. Nothing can be more deceit than that they should behave themselves respectfully towards them. “A son,” saith the Lord, “honoureth his father;” to this he is strongly obliged, and if he neglect it, is unworthy the character of a son. From hence God takes occasion to upbraid the Jews, who would be accounted his children, with a want of respect to him, Mal. i. 6. “If I be a Father, where is mine honour, saith the Lord of hosts, to you that despise my name?” There is hardly a worse sign of a base temper than a contempt of parents. He that was guilty of this under the Mosaick constitution, was pronounced accursed in a very solemn manner, to deter persons from so horrid a crime, Deut. xxvii. 16. “Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or mother: and all the people shall say Amen.” Solomon certainly thought this a very crying sin, Prov. xxx. 17. “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles eat it.” His end in all likelihood will be untimely and shameful. The respect which this wise and great king shewed his mother, gave an amiable lustre to his grandeur,” 1 Kings ii. 19. “Bathsheba went unto king Solomon to speak unto him for Adonijah: and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right hand.” How commendable was the tender care of Shem and Japhet in hiding, both from themselves

selves and others the dishonour of their father! we cannot but approve of the curse denounced upon unnatural Cham, by whom it was exposed.

Parents may keep their children at too awful a distance from them, which generally produces very bad effects ; but they should carefully avoid whatever tends to render themselves contemptible in their sight. However, the weakness of parents will not justify the rudeness and incivility of children ; the superior relation wherein they stand, makes it very reasonable they should be treated by them with deference in every stage and condition of life. A submissive carriage is highly becoming children, when they are rebuked and corrected by their parents. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of this, as a duty that was generally practised in his time, chap. xii. 9. “ We
“ have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected
“ us, and we gave them reverence.” We did
“ not rise up in opposition to them, nor clamour
“ against them for dealing unjustly with us. We
“ bore with meekness the chastisements they
“ thought fit to lay upon us, being convinced
“ that they had a right to chasten us, and that
“ they in their superior wisdom knew better than
“ we did what was proper to be done.” Sad is the prospect which parents have, when their children despise their rebukes and corrections, when their behaviour under them is haughty and stubborn. It is very observable, that the scriptures, in speaking of the fear and honour due to parents, does often expressly mention both of them ; the mother as well as the father ; nay, she is placed first, Lev. xix. 3. “ Ye shall fear every man his
“ mother and his father.” May it not be the design of this order of the words to guard against those unwarrantable freedoms with the mother, to
which

which her fondness may be apt to give too much encouragement? Children are prone to entertain a mean opinion of her judgment, especially when she labours under the infirmities of age; therefore the wise man gives a particular caution against this, Prov. xxiii. 22, "Despise not thy mother when she is old."

3. It is the duty of children to be obedient to their parents. Of all the creatures we are acquainted with, mankind are the longest, before they become capable of shifting for themselves: And it seems to be the design of providence in keeping them so many years in a state of dependence upon their parents, to train them up to obedience. Parents have something of a property in their children; this gives them an authority over them. It may be justly presumed, that the great love which they bear them will secure them from all injurious commands; they will be inclined hereby to require nothing of them, but what they apprehend to be for their good; and the greater experience of parents qualifies them for the government of their children; they are much better judges of what they ought to avoid, and what they should do, than they themselves are, especially in their childhood. Is it not then very fit they should be governed by them? The power of parents was carried to a very great height in some of the best ordered of the antient heathen states; and they appointed very infamous punishments for disobedient children. The law of Moses ordained, that the stubborn rebellious son, who went on in a course of wickedness in spite of all the commands and chastenings of his parents, should be publicly put to death, Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20, 21. We find in the New Testament obedience to parents required and urged with great force of argument:

This

this is said to be right; it is in itself a very fit and proper thing, and it is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Indeed children are under a superior obligation to God; so that they are not bound to observe their parents commands, if they are contrary to his will, who is the Father of their spirits. Therefore when the apostle saith, "Children, obey your parents" in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the "Lord," Col. iii. 20. his words are to be understood with that limitation which he inserts, Eph. vi. 1. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." When their requirements are not inconsistent with children's duty to the Lord, obedience to them is right and pleasing to him.

The Lord Jesus has given an example of filial obedience. It is recorded of him, that he was subject to his supposed father and real mother, Luke ii. 51.

The great pains and expence of parents, in bringing up their children, give them a right to dispose of them in the world: but as wise and good parents will consult the inclinations of their children; so dutiful children will be careful not to act against, or without their will, in such an important affair. We commonly find, that when children are not governed by their parents in the choice which they make of persons to be their partners for life, to stand in the nearest relation to them, they do not only hereby occasion great grief of heart to those whom they are strongly obliged to please, but involve themselves in a great deal of difficulty and trouble; so that they act a very foolish, as well as an unjust and ungrateful part.

4. It is the duty of children to relieve and support their parents, if they need their help. That this is comprised in the word Honour, is plain from what

what our Lord says, Matt. xv. he charges the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees with "transgressing" the commandments of God by their tradition," ver. 3. In proof of this he quotes the fifth commandment, ver. 4. "God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother." Which he tells them they made void by teaching, that "whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is corban," that is, a gift consecrated to some holy use, "by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father and his mother, he shall be free, ver. 5. 6. It is thus expressed, Mark vii. 12. "And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother." Which evidently shews that the command to honour father and mother, obliges children to succour them under their burdens and necessities. To this, gratitude strongly binds them. How much have their parents done for them! they have supported them through their helpless infancy; denied themselves of many comforts to supply their wants, laboured with great solicitude to make their lives safe and easy: should not children then contribute to the utmost of their power with the greatest readiness, to the sustenance of their parents, when they stand in any need of their aid? It is in itself a thing most equitable, and the word of God informs us, it is "acceptable before him, that children requite their parents," 1 Tim. v. 4. Are they in a capacity of being helpful to them, of returning the kindness in some measure which they have received from them, this they should account a singular instance of the Divine goodness, which deserves their most thankful acknowledgments. In short, children have one way or another cost their parents a great deal; will it not then be great baseness in them to grudge anything they can do for their relief?

3. I proceed to speak of the duties of people to their ministers.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has not only given some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists ; but some pastors and teachers, stated officers, "for the perfecting of his saints, for the edifying of his body," Eph. iv, 11, 12. He has empowered them to dispense the ordinances of his gospel, and to teach men to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded them, promising for their encouragement in this difficult work, to be "with them alway, "even to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. It is incumbent upon them to take heed to their ministry, that they fulfil it ; to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock, over which they are made overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood ; to exhort and rebuke with all authority : And there are several duties required of the people in the scripture, relating to their ministers. These shall be set before you in the best light I can.

1. It is the duty of people to esteem their ministers very highly in love for their work's sake. This is expressly commanded, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. The office wherewith they are invested is very honourable ; the work wherein they are engaged is of the utmost importance to mankind : they pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God : They are sent by the King of Kings upon the kindest errand. This is plainly intimated by the words of the prophet, which the apostle quotes, Rom. x. 15. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things !" Surely then they should be received with an affectionate respect. Christ resents the spite and scorn with which his ministers are treated in the faithful discharge of their duty

to him, as injuries done to himself. He told the seventy disciples, when he sent them to preach, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me," Luke, x. 16. Those who are employed in the ministerial function, if they answer the true design of it, are great blessings; they watch for the souls of men; they are ministers by whom they believe, by whom they obtain precious faith, which interests them in all the invaluable blessings of the gospel. Is it not highly unreasonable and ungrateful to treat such useful persons, upon whom God puts so much honour, with contempt, and to make them the objects of perpetual ridicule? It is indeed of great consequence to the people, that the ministers of the gospel be had in good esteem; for their instructions are like to be but of little service, when their persons and offices are slighted.

2. They should carefully attend upon their ministry, and submit themselves to their spiritual guidance. Gospel-ministers bring from the Lord very important messages unto men: is it not fit then they should be heard with great seriousness? what they deliver is not the word of man, but of God; and should it not be received with reverence? He that heareth them, as our Saviour said, heareth him, Luke x. 16. They are appointed to treat with the children of men about their eternal concerns. Their ministrations therefore should be suited to do good to souls: and it ought to be the sincere desire of those who sit under them, that they may be hereby made wise unto salvation: they should hearken to their instructions with an humble and teachable temper, "receiving with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls," James i. 21.

The apostle exhorts the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 17.

to “obey them that had the rule over them, and
 “to submit themselves, for they watched for their
 “souls.” Indeed no order of men have dominion
 over the faith of Christians. It is far from being
 their duty blindly to follow the direction of their
 spiritual guides, to yield an implicit belief and sub-
 mission to their dictates. The word rendered there
obey, signifies an obedience on a persuasion. The
 conduct of the Bereans deserves the imitation of all,
 who searched the scriptures daily, in order to be
 satisfied of the truth of those things that were
 preached unto them, upon which account the cha-
 racter of *noble* is given unto them, Acts xvii. 11.
 The arguments produced by ministers to support
 their doctrines, and to enforce their exhortations,
 should be attended to with care; and if they ap-
 pear to be agreeable to the word of God, the in-
 fallible rule of faith and practice, they should be
 submitted to. It adds weight to them, that they
 come in the virtue of a divine ordinance, that they
 are proposed by persons authorized by God for this
 purpose: this will aggravate the guilt of those by
 whom they are rejected.

3. It is the people's duty to pray for their mini-
 sters. Though a Paul should plant, and an Apol-
 los water, yet the increase is of God. Therefore
 we find the apostle requiring Christians again and
 again to pray for him and his fellow-labourers, 1
 Theff. v. 25. “Brethren, pray for us.” This ex-
 hortation is repeated in the 2d epist. chap. iii. 1.
 “Finally, brethren, pray for us.” You will also meet
 with it Heb. xiii. 18. “Pray for us.” It is very evi-
 dent that this is a duty of great consequence, other-
 wise the performance of it would not have been
 urged in such a pressing manner. Did the great
 apostle Paul, who was so eminently fitted for the
 work of the ministry, stand in need of the prayers
 of

of Christians? how much more does the case of ordinary ministers, whose gifts and graces fall vastly short of those which he had received, require their help? People neglect their own best interest, when they forget to make supplication for their ministers. It ought to be their daily request to God, that he would "clothe them with salvation;" that they may come unto them "in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ;" that they may be richly furnished by him for the weighty service to which they are called, and blessed with such assistances of the divine Spirit, as may enable them to fulfil it with faithfulness and success.

4. They should with cheerfulness, according to their ability, contribute to the maintenance of their ministers. The office of the ministry is attended with great difficulties; the right discharge of the duties of it requires close study, and great application: "who is sufficient for these?" It is very desirable therefore, that those who are engaged in them should be as little encumbered as may be with the cares and businesses of life. As strait and mean circumstances in the world are apt to distract their thoughts, and to dispirit them in the pursuit of their hard work; so there is danger of their labours being hereby brought under contempt: does it not then concern such as partake of them, to endeavour to render their lives easy and reputable? It is just that he who is "taught in the word, should communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things," Gal. vi. 6. "Who goeth a warfare, (saith the apostle,) any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof?" 1 Cor. ix. 7. He pursues this argument through several of the following verses: in the 11th he says, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?"

And

And in the 14th, he declares, “ The Lord ordain-
 “ ed, that they who preach the gospel, should live
 “ of the gospel.” I come,

4. To discourse of the duties of servants to their masters. Though mistresses be not expressly mentioned in the scripture, when it speaks of the duties of servants; yet parity of reason shews that they are obliged to the same behaviour towards their mistresses that is required of them towards their masters, for their authority relating to them is the same.

1. Their carriage towards them should be respectful. This is enjoined upon them in very strong terms, 1 Tim. vi. 1. “ Let as many servants as
 “ are under the yoke, count their own masters
 “ worthy of all honour.” A meek and humble deportment does in a special manner become their low station in life: and they are far from being contemptible, when their temper and behaviour are conformable to their circumstances; but they make a very despicable figure, when they are assuming and haughty. Though in Christ Jesus there are neither bond nor free, there is no distinction made betwixt them in respect of spiritual gospel-privileges; yet the brother of low degree should not be puffed up with the consideration of his being advanced hereby, to stand upon a level with the brother of high degree, imagining that he is as good as himself, and that there is no reason why he should shew him any great deference: for the spiritual advantages of christianity do not impair but strengthen the obligations of persons to discharge the duties of the civil life: the apostle was aware that Christian servants were in danger of deriving encouragement from the honour which the gospel puts upon them, to act disagreeable to their condition in the world, therefore he wisely takes care that they should be guarded against such a temptation, 1 Tim.

vi. 2. "They that have believing masters, let them
" not despise them, because they are brethren, but
" rather do them service, because they are faithful,
" and beloved, partakers of the benefit.

2. It is the duty of servants to obey the lawful commands of their masters. The apostle charges Titus to make this the subject of his exhortation to them, Chap. ii. 9. "Exhort servants to be obedient
" unto their own masters, and to please them well
" in all things." They should be very careful and circumspect to avoid those things that may be offensive to them: this is the import of that apostolical injunction, 1 Pet. ii. 18. "Servants, be subject
" to your masters with fear." Their obedience should not be forced, but ready, and without grumbling. When their masters require any thing of them that is disagreeable unto their inclinations, or find fault with their conduct, they should not make rude and surly replies; thus we are to understand these words, Tit. ii. 9. Not answering again.

Servants should consider, that while they are executing the just orders of their earthly masters, they are doing the will of God, who has an unquestionable right to their most cheerful service; they are instructed, Eph. vi. 7. "to be obedient to them,
" with good will, doing service, as to the Lord,
" and not to men;" who is represented in the 8th verse as a most equitable and condescending Lord,
" knowing that whatsoever good thing any man
" doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord,
" whether he be bond or free:" he is not only just, but exceeding bountiful to those who conscientiously discharge the duties of their callings, how mean soever they be. The apostle speaking unto servants, Col. iii. 22. of the obedience which they owed to their masters, according to the flesh,
adds

adds in the following verses, “ And whatsoever ye
“ do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not un-
“ to men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall re-
“ ceive the reward of inheritance: for ye serve
“ the Lord Christ.”

3. They should serve their masters with faithful-
ness. The affairs committed unto them ought to
be carefully managed by them, to the best advan-
tage of those by whom they are entrusted. It is
not only sinful in them to defraud their masters
themselves, but to suffer them either knowingly, or
through negligence, to be wronged by others: this
to be sure is inconsistent with that entire good fide-
lity to which they are obliged, Tit. ii. 9, 10. “ Ex-
“ hort servants to be obedient to their own masters;
“ not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity.” It
is their duty to be contented with such things as are
proper for their stations; and they should beware
of taking any thing to their own use which is not
allowed them. Servants are very desirous, as well
they may, of being reputed honest; it would be
happy both for themselves, and for those with whom
they have to do, if they shewed an equal concern
to deserve that valuable character. They are apt
to entertain too narrow a notion of honesty. It is
dishonest not only to rob those in whose service they
are engaged, but to waste their goods, and to spend
their time in sloth and idleness. Their time is
their master's, therefore they are unjust to them,
when they mispend this, when they do not lay it
out to promote their interest. Faithfulness obliges
them to diligence: they should not merely make
a shew of minding their business, while the eyes of
those by whom they are employed are upon them;
but they ought to follow it in good earnest during
their absence, considering that they serve the Lord,
whose eyes are continually upon them: He always
observes

observes how they discharge the duties of their places, and their neglects of them are very offensive in his sight. Though by an artful dissimulation they may conceal their negligence from their masters here on earth, and so escape their anger; yet they cannot impose upon their great Lord and Master who is in heaven, whose displeasure is most to be dreaded. Dare they not be remiss and sluggish in the sight of their fellow-creatures? Surely the consideration of their being ever under the notice of their great God should excite them to follow their work with industry, when no other beholds them. To this effect the apostle speaks, Col. iii. 22, 23. "Servants, obey in all things your masters, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, pleasing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Thus I have insisted, as the pointed limits of my discourse would allow, upon some of the principal duties which are owing to superiors: and while I have attempted to explain their nature, I have not neglected to set forth the obligations that men are under to the performance of them. It is of great consequence that these be known and practised. Persons of all ranks commonly are much more pleased to hear the duties of others insisted upon, than their own: and the thoughts of those who are in lower relations are apt to be very much employed about the behaviour of such as are above them; they watch their conduct, and are not sparing of their censures, if they do not act as they would have them. But it would be better for them to mind their own proper duties more; they should be careful to learn and do those things which are in a special manner becoming their sta-

tions in life. Give me leave to press this with a few arguments.

1. If inferiors would conscientiously render to those above them their dues, it would greatly contribute to the good order of the world; this earth would hereupon become a much more agreeable place. What confusion and distractions would be hereby prevented! Kingdoms, churches, and families would be more peaceful, and make a more beautiful figure, if their several members behaved aright towards those that were intrusted with the care and government of them. I readily own that many of the disorders which abound in the present state, arise from the mismanagement of those who are in higher ranks; but their duties are to be the subject of the following discourse.

2. The condition of inferiors would be made more easy and comfortable, by the discharge of their duty towards those above them: they are prone to envy their superiors, and to repine at their better circumstances; but they would find more satisfaction in their own places, how mean soever they be, if they took care to acquit themselves well in them. The effect of righteousness is quietness. Then persons enjoy most peace, when they move regularly in the spheres assigned them by Divine Providence, be they higher or lower.

3. When inferiors carefully perform the duties of their relations, they are hereby rendered truly valuable. It is requisite, in order to maintain the government of the world, that civil respect be paid to persons answerable to their stations in it; but outward circumstances neither increase nor diminish of themselves the real worth of men: they are to be valued, not according to the places wherein they stand, but as they behave in them. The righteous is more excellent than his wicked neighbour,
though

though he should be adorned with titles of great power and dignity. He deserves esteem, how low soever his rank in life is, who carries himself with humility and faithfulness, who readily complies with the requirements of those that have authority over him, and honestly executes the trusts they repose in him.

4. The credit of religion is much affected by the behaviour of its professors, even in the most inferior relations. The bulk of mankind form their notions of religion, more by what they observe in the lives of those that profess it, than by its established rules; and they are commonly much more concerned for their own things, than for the things of God: therefore, when such as make pretence of godliness, neglect the duties of their relations to their fellow-creatures, a much greater clamour is raised against their profession, than when they withhold from their Creator the honours that are due to his name. The words of the apostle plainly suppose, that the gospel would suffer greatly in its reputation, if those of the lowest order among men, who profess to embrace it, behave amiss towards their superiors, 1 Tim. vi. 1. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." On the other hand, he intimates that they are capable of recommending christianity by a good conversation in their places, Tit. ii. 9, 10. "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." So that if you have any regard to the good order of the world, to your own peace and reputation, and to the credit of the gospel, take care to discharge

the duties incumbent upon you relating to your civil governors, parents, ministers, and masters. And the performance of these will not be very difficult, if you take the following advices, with which I shall conclude:—

1. Cultivate in yourselves an humble temper: this will dispose you to be contented with your lower stations, and to carry yourselves well towards those above you. When the apostle had exhorted Christians to be subject one to another, he adds, “and be clothed with humility,” 1 Pet. v. 5. Pride is a great spring of disrespect and disobedience to superiors.

2. Suppose yourselves in the place of your superiors, and seriously consider what behaviour you would expect from others in that condition; this would set your duty before you in an easy and convincing light. Happy would it be for mankind, if persons of all ranks and characters would observe that excellent rule of our Lord, Luke vi. 31. “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”

SERMON

 SERMON XLVII.

Duties to Inferiors, viz. Children, Servants,
 Poor.

ACTS X. 2.

*A devout Man, and one that feared God with all his
 House, which gave much Alms to the People.*

WE are surpris'd to find, by the verse before the text, that this was the character of a soldier and a Gentile, of one Cornelius an officer in the Roman army. But as he and his family were designed of God to be the first-fruits of the Gentiles that should be brought into the church of Christ, divine grace had already dispos'd him, in a good measure, to receive the gospel. Though he was a Gentile by birth and nation, and had probably been educated in the heathen superstition, yet he had already forsaken the idolatry of his ancestors : he was a devout man, who feared and worshipp'd the true God, according to the measure of light and knowledge which he had. It is an addition to his character, that all his family feared
 God

God as well as himself; which supposes that their religion and piety was, under God, owing to his influence and care. It is also mentioned to his honour, that he was a very charitable man, who gave much alms to the people. There were few such good men among the Gentiles in those times; there are few such good soldiers among Christians in ours.

In this man we have a fair example and pattern of the practice of the chief of those duties which are to be the theme of this discourse, viz. the duties of superiors towards their inferiors; as of parents towards their children, of masters towards their servants, and of the rich towards the poor. I begin,

First, With the duties of parents towards their children.

The duties which children owe to their parents have been represented in the last discourse: and now let parents know, that there are duties on their side too; duties which they owe even to their own children, as well as duties which their children owe to them.

The sum of the parents duties is thus laid down by St Paul, Eph. vi. 4. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." On which text chiefly I shall build this first part of my discourse. The duties of parents, as there represented, are of two kinds, the one negative, and the other positive.

I. Here is a negative precept, or restraint, laid upon parents, as to the exercise of their authority over their children, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" which certainly does not mean that they must never correct them for their faults, for that is in some cases highly necessary
for

for their children's good, and it is recommended in scripture as one means of a good education, "The rod and reproof give wisdom," Prov. xxix. 15. Therefore "with-hold not correction from a child, for if thou beat him with a rod he shall not die; thou shalt beat him with a rod, and shalt save his soul from hell," Prov. xxiii. 13, 14. It is a foolish and sinful indulgence of children, to let their faults go unpunished, rather than grieve their spirits by a proper chastisement. This is so far from a prudent love, that it looks as if the parent hated his child, and had no concern for his welfare. "He that hateth his son, spareth the rod; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24. It was never St Paul's design therefore to wrest the rod out of the parent's hand. He certainly does not mean that parents must never correct their children at all; that they must never cross their inclination, nor lay any such restraints upon them as will displease them, and put them out of humour. But his charge to parents, not to provoke their children to wrath, must be taken in somewhat a limited sense. "Do not provoke them to wrath with undue and unreasonable severity. Do not abuse your authority and power to tyrannise over them, give them no just occasion to be angry with you." "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged," Coloss. iii. 21. that is, either lest by means of your severe and rigorous treatment of them, they should grow dejected and melancholy, lest their spirits should be cowed and broke, which is the way to make them stupid and useless creatures: or lest they should despair of pleasing you, and so no longer endeavour it, nor value your reproofs and corrections any more. As the horse which is bridled in too strait, grows impatient of the

the rein, so when children are disciplined and restrained with over-much severity, they are apt to grow impatient of their parents authority and rule, and to fly out into wild licentiousness. Let parents therefore be cautioned, as well against cruel severity toward their children on the one hand, as against a foolish and fond indulgence of them on the other. Remember how severely God threatened Eli of old for not restraining his sons from doing evil, 1 Sam. ii. 13. "I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Remember also, that unreasonable and undue severity is the way to discourage them, and to alienate both their love and their fear from you. If you would have them take your counsels, and profit by your instructions, you must not provoke their hatred, but endeavour to secure their love. You must strive to soften them with gentleness and kindness, and not harden them by tyrannical cruelty. Remember again that your children are parts of yourselves, they spring from your own bowels, they received their life and first nourishment from you; if you are not tender of them, and kind to them, who should? Where, alas! must they fly? into whose arms must they throw themselves, if their cruel parents drive them away from theirs? The child of cruel and hard-hearted parents is, methinks, an object of great compassion.

Let me recommend to the imitation of human parents, the example of their heavenly Father, who "is slow to wrath, and plenteous in mercy, who never afflicts willingly, nor grieves his children for his own pleasure, but for their profit:" Who, though he does sometimes "visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes;

“ stripes ; nevertheless, his loving-kindness does
 “ he not take from them ;” and when they repent
 and amend, he is easily reconciled to them ; “ he
 “ forgives their iniquity, and remembers their sin
 “ no more.” I proceed,

II. To consider the positive duties of parents
 towards their children ; the chief of which are
 summed up in these few words, “ Bring them up in
 “ the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The
 Greek words in that text translated nurture and
 admonition, are both of so large a signification,
 that it is not easy to determine what is the precise
 meaning of each of them as distinct from the other.
 Some suppose that *paideia* nurture, signifies discipline
 and correction ; and that *nothria* admonition, means
 instruction : Others imagine that the first word re-
 fers to human education, and the latter to religious
 instruction. I have no room here for critical en-
 quiries, nor are they at present very necessary : it
 will be sufficient to lay before you the positive du-
 ties of parents toward their children in as few and
 words as I can.

1. It is their duty to bring them up, to nurse
 them in their infancy, to feed and clothe them, to
 watch over them and protect them in their helpless
 age ; and also to provide as well as they can for
 their subsistence in the world, when they grow up
 to years of maturity. “ Parents should lay up for
 “ their children, 2 Cor. xii. 14. Or if they can-
 not leave them estates, they ought to provide them
 with trades, by which they may get a livelihood.
 Poor parents, who can lay up nothing for their
 children, should bring them up to labour, and inure
 them to industry, which sometimes proves a better
 portion than an estate of inheritance. God has
 taught the very brutes, by an instinct of nature, to
 bring up their young offspring ; and therefore for

human parents not to bring up their children with the best care they can, is worse than heathenish, for it is worse than brutish. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8.

2. Parents should bring up their children in nurture, which may probably signify human knowledge and literature. Such parents as are civilized, and set by the good providence of God above a state of savage barbarity, should endeavour that their children may be brought up, not like savage Indians in brutish ignorance, but that they may be furnished with useful knowledge, and polished by as liberal an education as their circumstances will afford to give them. They should endeavour to cultivate their minds, as well as nourish their bodies; and to form them for usefulness in civil life, as well as feed and clothe them till they grow to the bigness of men. But

3. The greatest and most important duty of parents towards their children, is "to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord," in the knowledge and fear of God, as remembering that they have souls as well as bodies, souls which are immortal, and that either happiness or misery will be their everlasting portion; and that too, very probably, according as they are trained up in their younger years, either in divine knowledge and piety, or in ignorance and wickedness. For it is a scripture maxim, Prov. xxii. 6. "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Which, like other general rules, may very well stand with some few exceptions and instances to the contrary. Generally speaking, education forms a man for his whole life. The principles which were early infused

fed into the mind, are hardly or ever wore out again: but then it is, most commonly, that the sure foundation is laid either of happiness or of misery hereafter and for ever. It is therefore a most important duty of all parents to use the best means they can, to train up their children in the ways of religion and piety.

Now concerning this duty of parents towards their children, I will offer them a few directions, and a few motives to persuade them to practise it.

First, The directions which I would humbly offer to parents, for the religious education of their children, are these.

1. Instruct and admonish them, that they may not perish for lack of knowledge, or of seasonable warning. Teach them, more especially, and in the first place the plain and fundamental truths and duties of religion; such as, their lost estate by nature, the evil and danger of sin, and the remedy which God has provided for perishing sinners, by the sacrifice of his Son, and by faith in his blood. Earnestly press them to believe in Christ, and to consent to the gospel covenant. Endeavour to convince them of the reasonableness and urgent necessity of so doing, and of the comfort and happiness that will accrue from it. Improve all the interest which you have in their affections and dutiful regards, to bring them to God and Christ.

Speak to them about these things with great seriousness and affection. Let them see that you have a mighty concern for their souls; it may probably be a means of awakening some concern for their souls in themselves too.

Speak to them about these matters frequently, as the people of Israel were instructed of God to inculcate his law upon their children, Deut. vi.

7. 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,

“ children, and shalt talk of them when thou
“ fittest in thine house, and when thou walkest
“ by the way, and when thou liest down, and
“ when thou risest up.”

Remember to make proper allowances for the weakness of their young and feeble minds. Do not you be impatient with them, nor discourage them with too severe rebukes, if they do not at once remember all your instructions, nor grow wise and good so fast as you would have them. You should in this matter imitate Jacob's prudence in another affair, who “ led on gently as the
“ young flocks could bear.” Very observable to this purpose are those words of the prophet, *Isai. xxviii. 9, 10.* “ Whom shall he teach knowledge?
“ and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and
“ drawn from the breasts: for precept must be
“ upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a
“ little.” So must children be taught by frequently repeated instructions, and such as are suitable to their capacities and their years. And think it not enough to make them learn some form of sound words, and say it by rote, as parrots are taught to pronounce words and sentences; but endeavour that their minds may be informed and improved in knowledge, as well as their memories loaded with words and phrases.

Begin this work of instructing your children very early, that their minds may be seasoned with good principles of religion and virtue, before they get a taint of profaneness and vanity. Endeavour, if possible, to be before-hand with the world and Satan, by warning them of temptations before they are offered to them.

Keep them as much as possible out of the way
of

of temptation, and especially from that dangerous temptation of wicked company. Evil communications are very apt to corrupt good manners; especially the manners of young persons, who are more prone to imitation than those who are grown up to advanced years.

Reprove and check them for sin betimes. Watch the first breaking out of natural corruption, and endeavour to nip vice in the bud, before it ripens into the bitter fruit of impiety and profaneness. Labour to pluck up those evil weeds in the early spring of life, lest they should grow up and choak all the good that you are endeavouring to plant in them. Reprove and correct them while as yet there is hope, lest in a little time "they should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Wink a little at their childish follies, and do not be perpetually chiding them for trifles; lest the commonness of your rebukes should make them to be little minded. But whenever you observe any thing that is really sinful in their words or practice, be sure to frown upon it with due severity; and let them know that they can offend you in nothing so much, as in sinning against God.

Instruct them betimes in the duties of religious worship. Teach their infant tongues the language of prayer and praise. As soon as they know how to ask you for what they want, let them be directed to ask all blessings of their Father which is in heaven. Assist their young devotions, by putting words into their mouths; and endeavour to impress their minds with a serious sense of the importance of this their duty. As they grow up, direct and encourage them to the constant practice of secret prayer; allot them some proper place of retirement for that purpose, and watch them that

that they do not neglect it. Bring them also to the place of public worship, as soon as they can be taught to behave with tolerable decency, and without giving disturbance to others. Teach them to reverence God's day and his ordinances. Thus should you put your children betimes into the way of God's blessing; and who can tell how soon the divine Spirit may fasten some good word on their conscience? and thereby lay an early foundation in their souls of eternal happiness and glory. It is time now to proceed to the remaining directions, which I shall be obliged to give you in fewer words.

As,

2. Be careful to set your children good examples. There is a natural proneness in children to imitate their parents, to which the apostle seems to allude, Eph. v. 1. "Be ye therefore followers, (or imitators) of God as dear children." How much then is it the duty, and how much should it be the care of parents to "behave themselves wisely, to walk within their house with a perfect heart," and to practise those duties themselves in which they instruct their children; that so by their proneness to imitate their parents, they may be led to follow the thing that good is. Besides, you must not expect that they will much regard what you say to them about any sin or duty, while they see you contradict it in your own practice. How can the young child believe that it is so wicked a thing to tell a lie; that "all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;" when he finds that even his own parents, whose wisdom he is taught to reverence, do sometimes tell him lies? Or how shall the child of swearing parents learn to fear an oath? Or, suppose you should persuade your children to believe that there is indeed all that evil and danger in sin which

you

you tell them of, what opinion must they then have of you, if they see you do wickedly? While you teach them to honour and fear God, you will sink their opinion of your wisdom and goodness, and necessarily teach them to think meanly of yourselves. Let it be your constant care therefore to confirm your good instructions and counsels to your children by your own example; and not only to point out to them the way to heaven, but to go before them in it. This will probably do more to incline them to virtue and religion, than all the reasoning and arguing in the world without it can do. I must not forget another direction, which is of as great importance as either of the former, *viz.*

3. Pray to God for his blessing to make your endeavours successful. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but all in vain, unless God is pleased to give the increase. You may possibly command your children's ears, so far as to oblige them to hear you, but their hearts are out of your reach and power; God only can change and renew them by his grace. Of him therefore do you beg this blessing for your dear children; wrestle with him earnestly for the life of their souls; bear their everlasting interest upon your minds, both in your closet, and in your family devotions: let them hear and know what a vast concern you have for them, by the earnestness of your prayers on their behalf. How probably may this be a means of making some good impressions on their minds? as well as of obtaining for them influences from above, to regenerate and save their souls. These are the advices which I would humbly offer to parents for the religious education of their children. Let me now,

Secondly,

Secondly, Press their duty in this matter upon them with a few motives ; as,

1. I would intreat parents for their dear children's sake, to endeavour to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord. Do not you know that your children are by nature depraved and polluted, and children of wrath even as others? And that they must be born again, or they cannot see the kingdom of God? And are you not concerned that this divine change may be wrought in them, that they may be healed and saved? Probably you take pains to provide for them comfortably in this world, in which you do well; but is there not a greater duty which lies upon you with respect to your children, and a far more important interest of theirs, about which you should be more concerned, even the interest of their souls, and their eternal salvation? For, alas! what will the world profit them should their souls be lost, should they be cast-aways from God for ever? How much better had it been that you had been written childless, than that your dear children should perish in their sins, and be miserable to all eternity! And now, will you not do all you can to prevent it? If you love them, surely you will.

Consider also of what mighty advantage true religion will be to your children. How it will adorn their persons, and brighten their character; it is the fairest ornament of our younger years. And when once "Christ is theirs, all things are theirs," 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. from henceforth all things shall work together for their good. Their heavenly Father's blessing shall attend them all their days: and let death come when it will, their souls are safe, they are secured of happiness hereafter and for ever. Need I say any more to persuade you, for your children's

children's sake, to use your best endeavours to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord.

2. I would exhort parents to their duty in this matter, for Christ and the church's sake, that Christ may have a seed to serve him, and that his churches, may live and flourish in the world, when you are dead and gone. For from whence is it probable that they should receive a supply of new members, as the old ones wear off, but from your children? If these should prove generally wicked and vile, the churches of Christ must, in all human probability, sink, and religion die out of the land with this present generation. Have you any zeal for Christ then? any true concern for his interest and kingdom? shew it this way; endeavour that your seed may be a seed to serve him in their generation: that when you are removed away by death, they may be the support of his churches, and an honour to his cause here on earth, as well as the monuments of his glorious grace in heaven for ever.

3. Let me press this duty upon parents for their own sake; as well that they may have comfort in their children while they live with them here, as that they may have a good account to give of their charge hereafter, and that they may meet them with joy another day, and in a better world. Could you but once prevail with your children to fear God, there is no fear but they will be dutiful to you; for then conscience will oblige them to it, as well as natural affection and honour. Therefore "the Father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice:" and especially if he be a righteous man himself. How will it rejoice his soul to see this good success of his pious endeavours! this blessed return of his many prayers! it helps to soften the parent's dying bed, that he leaves his children in

the safe way to heaven. He bids them farewell, but for a little time, and hopes to meet them again shortly in a better world.

Consider further, that the faithful discharge of your duty in this matter will turn to your comfort, in the account which you are to give of your stewardship another day. Has not God given you your children in charge, to bring them up for him? and did you not solemnly promise to do so, when you devoted them to him in baptism? Remember, that a day of reckoning will come shortly: and let me recommend to your serious perusal those awful words, Ezek. iii. 17, 18. which concern parents as well as ministers, "Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel;" and so has God made you watchmen in your families; "wherefore hear the word from my mouth, and give them warning from me. If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." Now, should your children die and perish through their neglect, how will you be able to hold up your heads at the great tribunal? Let me beg that you would lay this matter to heart; and if your conscience smites you for past neglects, may you now be quickened to more diligent endeavours to save your children's souls. But, on the other hand, if you have faithfully discharged your duty towards them, you will give up your account with joy; you will then be "a sweet favour of God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish." But especially if your pious labours have proved successful, how joyful will your meeting with your children be at the right hand of Christ? They will be a "crown of rejoicing to you" in

“ in the day of the Lord,” and from thenceforth and for ever.

Thus much concerning the duty of parents towards their children. The other duties of superiors to inferiors, which I proposed to treat of, must be considered more briefly. The

Second is, The duty of masters towards their servants. “ Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, forbearing threatening, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.” Col. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 9. Here the duty of masters and mistresses is plainly enjoined them ; as,

1. To give unto their servants that which is just and equal ; that is, to provide for them, and pay them their wages, according to their agreement with them, or with their parents or friends on their behalf. “ The hire of the labourer and servant kept back by fraud, will make a loud cry in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth,” and the God of justice will surely avenge their wrongs, James v. 4.

2. Masters must forbear threatening their servants. Which certainly does not mean that they must never reprove them for their faults, or even that they must not threaten to punish them, or turn them away, if they do not amend. The infinitely merciful God threatens sinners with hell and damnation, in order to awaken them to repentance, and thereby to prevent their ruin ; and so may earthly masters threaten their faulty servants ; and it is more kind and merciful so to do, and to wait for their amendment, than to proceed immediately to the utmost severity with them, without any threatening or warning at all. To forbear threatening then, can only mean, that they should not rail and storm at them, as some passionate masters are apt to do,

nor treat them with haughty contempt and cruel severity, but with mildness and lenity, as becomes the disciples of Christ, who even when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered he threatened not. Let earthly masters remember, that they also are servants of the great God, and but fellow-servants with their servants in his family. Let them remember how they have offended their master in heaven, and yet how kind he is to them, and how ready to forgive them; and so let them learn to practise towards their servants on earth. Let them remember that there is no respect of persons with him: that their servants are their fellow-creatures, who are made of the same blood, and whose natures are as noble as theirs, and who, if they are truly religious, may be as high in the favour of God, and may wear as glorious a crown in heaven as themselves.

3. It is the duty of masters to endeavour to promote the spiritual welfare of their servants; for this good Cornelius stands commended in our text, that through his influence and care, by the divine blessing, all his household was brought to fear God with him. You may read with what honour and high approbation God speaks of Abraham's pious care about this matter, Gen. xviii. 19. "I know
 " him, says God, that he will command his chil-
 " dern, and his household after him; and they
 " shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice
 " and judgment:" where his household being mentioned distinct from his children, must chiefly mean his servants. And such care did David take of the religion of his whole family, that he resolved not to suffer a wicked and lying servant to tarry in his sight; "Mine eyes, says he, shall be upon the
 " faithful of the land, that they may dwell with
 " me:

“ me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me, Psal. ci. 6, 7.

I need not here give any particular directions to masters of families, concerning this branch of their duty towards their servants; for the same heads of advice which I offered to parents before, may very well suit this other duty also. So should masters and mistresses instruct and admonish their servants, and set them good examples, and pray for them and with them every day. And the same motives too, with which I pressed the former duty, may be fitly applied to this, as,

1. Let me recommend it to you for your servants sake, that you would endeavour to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare. Have compassion on their souls, which are as noble in their nature, and as immortal as yours: suffer them not to perish and go to hell, if you can do any thing to prevent it. Suppose you were shipwrecked in company with others, would you not pity every companion in the common distress, and endeavour to save every one of them from drowning, especially if you could do it with safety to yourselves? Now consider your servants as companions with you in the common ruin of the fall; have you found a way of salvation for yourselves, and will you not pity their case, and tell them of it too? It is a common salvation which may be as effectual for them as for you. O! shew them the way of it, and teach them the way how to obtain it. It may be they are stupid, and not sensible of their danger; but will you not warn them of it? Let common humanity teach you compassion towards your servants souls.

2. Let me recommend this duty to you for Christ's sake. Have you any love to Christ? any zeal for the prosperity of his kingdom? and will you

you not endeavour that your whole household may know him, and serve him as well as yourselves? It is certain you have many opportunities and advantages of gaining converts to Christ in your own families, which you have not elsewhere. If then there be any consolation in Christ, if you have any love to this dear Saviour, as well as if you have any bowels and mercies towards your servants souls; you will surely endeavour to bring them to Christ, and do all you can to prevent their everlasting ruin, and promote their salvation.

3. Let me recommend this duty to you for your own sakes; that you may have faithful servants, who will make conscience of all their duty, and in whom you may securely trust. Servants who will pray for you, and will help to bring down the blessing of God on your whole family: as we read, that while good Joseph was Potiphar's servant, "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field," Gen. xxxix. 5.

Let me recommend to you the religious care of your servants, for your children's sake; that they may not be corrupted by wicked servants, as is too often the case. And let me recommend it to you for your own soul's sake, that you may have a good account to give of your trust and charge another day. But it may be, some masters will pretend that they never took any charge of their servants souls; and therefore if they finally miscarry, no blame will lie upon them for it. But consider, that these servants are a part of your household, to whom God expects that you should teach his way. And has not God by his Providence committed them to your charge? Have not the parents of your younger servants and apprentices committed their souls,

as

as well as bodies, to your charge and care? If they did not do it in exprefs words, yet does not the nature and reason of the thing plainly speak it? for on you they now depend, under God, for the means of knowledge and grace; if you do not instruct and admonish them, if you take no care of their souls; who must? Must they be left wholly to themselves, in their most dangerous years of temptation? Is there none to shew them any pity; none to take any care of their eternal interest? that would be a hard case indeed; and it would be a most cruel thing for parents to put out their children on such sad terms as these. But certainly this cannot be the case. It is very evident, from the reason of the thing, that masters have a charge of their servants souls, of which they must give an account another day. For your own sake therefore, that you may give up your account with joy and not with grief, let me once more urge it upon you, that you would use your best endeavours to promote your servants spiritual and eternal welfare. Resolve as Joshua did, that you and your whole house, as far as you can influence, will serve the Lord.

Thus much of the duty of masters towards their servants. It remains to add a few words,

Thirdly, Of the duty of the rich towards the poor. Which is not to despise them for their poverty, but to pity them as brethren and fellow-creatures in affliction; and by almsgiving to relieve their wants. For this also Cornelius stands commended in our text, He gave much alms to the people. It is expressly charged upon "them that are rich in this world, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 19. where by the rich we are to understand, not only persons of vast estates; but all such

to whom Providence has given more than is sufficient for their own necessary uses : for St Paul gives it in charge to the whole church at Corinth, (and it is not likely they were all persons of great estates) that “ upon the first day of the week, every one of them should lay by in store as God had prospered him, for charitable uses,” 1 Cor. xvi. that is, every one whom God had so prospered, that he could spare something to give to those that were in real want. It is very observable, that our blessed Saviour, who was but poor himself, yet practised alms-giving, and made it the custom of his family ; as may be gathered from John xii. 29. when he had said to Judas, “ What thou doest do quickly,” some of his disciples thought he meant of giving to the poor : they could be led to think so, only by his common practice, which, it seems, was to give something to the poor, out of the little that he had for the subsistence of his own family. And he pronounced his blessing on this duty, in that saying of his, which was well remembered by the disciples, and it is mentioned by St Paul, Acts xx. 35. “ It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Alms-giving then is the duty not only of those who have great estates, but of all who are rich enough to practise it in any measure. Let every one minister, according to the ability which God giveth him. Let him give his alms to the poor freely and cheerfully, not grudgingly, or as of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 6. and he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, Rom. xii. 8. not to be seen of men, and to gain their praises, but out of a sincere respect to God’s command, and an unfeigned love to his poor neighbours and brethren in Christ. Let him give prudently, doing good unto all as he has opportunity, and especially to the household of faith. Let him
give

give liberally, according to his circumstances; for he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. And, once more, let him give in faith, relying not on the merit of his own works, but wholly on the merits of Christ for their acceptance with God, and depending on his promises for a plentiful reward; "for he that giveth to the poor shall not lack. He lendeth to the Lord, and that which he giveth will he pay him again," Prov. xix.

17.

Therefore to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Hereby shall our riches be sanctified to us, according to that of our Saviour, Luke xi. 41. "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you." Such a dedication of a suitable part of what we have unto God, will, like the offering of the first fruits under the law, bring down a blessing on all the rest. The liberal soul shall be made fat. But above all other encouragements to the practice of this duty, is the promise which God has given us of a future and eternal recompence. It has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. And our Saviour has assured us, that in the day of final retribution, when every man shall receive according to his works, a special regard will be had to works of charity; and that those who have fed and relieved Christ, in his poor members, shall receive an hundred fold, even the kingdom of their Father, which he hath prepared for them from the foundation of the world: while the merciless and uncharitable shall be cast into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels

Having these promises therefore, dearly beloved, let us be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and not be weary of well-doing, for we shall reap in the end, if we faint not.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

 SERMON XLVIII.

Duties to Equals, Neighbours, Friends, Husband and Wife.

PROV. XVIII. 24.

A Man that hath Friends must shew himself Friendly.

THIS is one among the many wise maxims laid down by king Solomon, for the conduct of human life; it contains a proper hint or general rule for the duties belonging to friendship, and so by parity of reason, to all relations of equality, of which sort friendship is, and in a larger sense fitly expressive of all the rest; and that is, that the carriage of equals one to another should be friendly and equal on both sides. Love and benevolence is indeed due from us to all our fellow-creatures. But almost every relation gives it a new cast and form, and calls for a set of officers, new either for kind, measure, or manner. So then a particular

lar sort of friendliness and kindness is the common requisite of all the kinds of equal relation, more than of the superior and inferior respectively: yet still diversified according to the special nature of the relation sustained by the equals. And then, as all equals, considered as such, are independent one of another; the duties of every such relation are reciprocally the same on both sides, as far as circumstances admit, and the equality goes, and not correspondent only as in unequal relations.

I shall consider the duties between equals, (the subject I am now to insist on) under the four following heads, which exhibit in a gradual rise from lower to higher degrees of nearness, all the ranks of this sort of relatives, each of which has a common and equal part, though mixed with a disparity as to some of them:—

First, Those between neighbours.

Secondly, Friends in a more strict sense.

Thirdly, Brethren, the children of the same family.

Fourthly, Husbands and wives.

I begin with the *first* and lowest order of equals, those who are neighbours in situation to one another, and the duties which arise from hence. This indeed is the smallest remove from the general tie of humanity, and those common social affections and duties which are due to all of our species as they come in our way. Yet as there is more in common between neighbours than such who live at a distance, the former seem to challenge a preference in our kind regards and good offices above the latter, in like manner as those of the same country.

country, above those of another, all other things being equal*.

Not indeed as though we are obliged to make our neighbours our familiar friends and intimate companions; this is left to our own inclination and prudence: nor yet, again, are the largest effects of our benevolence and charity always to be disposed within the verge of the place where we reside; while, as is very possible and common, it does not contain the greatest number of those we are under the most special engagements to.

But then, least of all, must we suffer ourselves in conformity to the manners of those among whom we live, to become partners with them in any unlawful courses, whom we ought rather to reprove than to imitate and countenance therein. All places in the present degenerate state of the world are bad enough, and evil customs prevailing around us, have a mighty tendency to ensnare us; as the Israelites, of old were not in vain warned, against the wicked and idolatrous Canaanites who were left to dwell among them. Hence it is a necessary and important part of our duty, to arm ourselves with a sacred resolution and circumspection, that we may not be drawn into sinful practices and neglects, after the example, and by the influence of those who are about us. Rather than to do this, and so to sin against God, and wound our consciences, we must be content to bear patiently the censure of being unneighbourly and unmannerly, and sacrifice some conveniencies and comforts of the social life, to the greater obligation of maintaining our integrity, when the former cannot be had but at the expence of the latter. And, by the way, we should avoid,

* *Optime societas hominum conjunctioque servabitur, si, ut quisque erit conjunctissimus, ita in eum benignitatis plurimum conferatur. Cic. de Off.*

avoid, as far as we can, settling in such places where profane and profligate sinners abound, and there are very few or no good persons to associate with. Such were Sodom and the adjacent country, which while righteous Lot pitched on for the place of his abode, on account of their fertility and pleasantness, what awful reason had he afterward to repent of his choice!

Now, so far as consists with this care of our own spiritual preservation, and with all our engagements elsewhere, the sum of what we owe to our neighbours, is to be as kind, useful, and beneficent among them as possible, strictly avoiding, at the same time, what may be to the hurt of any. Particularly, we must endeavour to live in peace, and promote it among them: and, to this purpose, not officiously pry into, or intermeddle with the affairs of other families; or hastily take up, spread, much less raise reports prejudicial to our neighbours.

Again, we should be courteous, affable, and obliging to them on all occasions of converse, treating them with the accustomed forms of civility, and forbearing a stiff, supercilious and distant carriage. This piece of respect in friendly salutations, in civil language and deportment, is easy and cheap to pay to all we know, and is scarce forfeited by the worst of men. And yet, alas! it is hardly vouchsafed by some, even to the best of men, thro' pride and haughtiness, through a churlishness and moroseness of temper, or through bigotry, if they happen to think and practise in matters of religion differently from themselves.

Moreover, we should be ready to do and return those good offices which tend to mutual protection and accommodation, nor be backward to join, in proportion to our leisure or ability, in all reasonable

able and practicable undertakings for the common good of the whole vicinage.

It is also a very proper and becoming branch of our neighbourly duty, to assist with our counsel, advice, and patronage (as far as our own necessary affairs, and other obligations will permit) those about us, who may need and desire it; and then to reserve some portion, at least, of our voluntary charities to be distributed among the poor of the place where we dwell, even though the larger measures of it should be pre-engaged elsewhere. For, as it is the property of a good man to “disperse abroad, and give to the poor,” Psal. cxii. 9. 2 Cor. ix. 9. it seems but reasonable that a channel which lies so open to his hand, and near his own door, should not be wholly over-looked by him.

To this may be added, the suffering our neighbours to reap some secular advantage from us, by providing ourselves from among them, with some at least of the necessaries and conveniences of life, and not for the sake purely of small savings, without any necessity for such frugality, to procure them all from places at a distance.

Finally, We should strive all we can to promote virtue and goodness in the places of our respective residence, to reform the immoral and profane, and for this end to improve all the influence we can make over them by benignity and service; we should mourn over those sins we see or hear of among them which we cannot prevent, and pray for both their spiritual and temporal welfare.

Now such a disposition and conduct as this toward neighbours, (with due allowances for the different circumstances of places, as more or less large and populous, and the like) it is not recommended and enforced by the law of universal benevolence

volence to our fellow-creatures, as one branch of it, and a natural means to give it its fullest effect on the whole? For it is easy to perceive in the total disregard of all neighbourly civilities and benefits, that the course of benevolence could never go on regularly and smoothly; and many opportunities of exercising human affections, and being useful, which proximity of dwelling continually casts in the way of persons, would be lost.

Is not this included also in the sense of such general precepts of scripture as these? "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 18. "Render to all their dues, owe no man any thing, but to love one another: with a love which worketh no ill, (but all the good it can) to our neighbour." Chap. xiii. 7, 8. "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men," Gal. vi. 10. Thus God required the Jews, when sojourners in Babylon, to "seek and pray for the peace of the city," Jer. xxix. 7. adding this reason, that "in the peace thereof they should have peace." Our own private security and outward convenience is in a great measure wrapt up in that of the neighbourhood we belong to. On many occasions, those who live near together, may want one another's assistance. But we debar ourselves from all reasonable expectation of succour from others, when our turn comes to need it, if we have affected to live quite alone before, and altogether regardless of their good or evil.

Is not a diffusive kindness and usefulness a lovely character too? are not they who attain to it blessed with faithful Abraham, whom God promised so to bless, that he should be a blessing? Gen. xii. 2. Is not this a thing of good report? And are we not directed to think on, in order to practise such

such things as well as what are strictly just and true? Phil. iv. 8. O! what credit and honour does this bring to the gospel in the world, when it can be said of those who profess it, that they are courteous and kind to all with whom they have to do, are ready to join with their fellow-inhabitants, in all useful and charitable designs, in every thing but what is evil or has the appearance of it, and will come behind none, according to their ability, in any good work? But, on the other hand, if persons professing godliness suffer those who live nigh them to see or taste no fruits of their humanity and benevolence, though they should not be altogether wanting in these things elsewhere: will not this naturally lead them to think that they do no more good abroad than near home? And thus the name of God and his doctrine may be blasphemed.

Might I not propose our blessed Lord himself as a pattern here, who communicated his heavenly doctrine to his own citizens, among some of the first he preached to?

Proceed we now to a

Second set of equal duties, those of friendship. This forms a relation or much greater intimacy than neighbourhood, and so establishes an obligation to an higher sort of degree of kind affections and actions. I consider it now not as blended with other relations, but as arising from a voluntary agreement or choice of persons in other respects independent, to cultivate a familiar correspondence together. Several are the springs and forms of human friendship, according to a less or more strict notion of it. But it is not my present province, to inquire particularly into them, any more than into the choice of friends, which is an affair of great nicety and prudence. Yet let it be observed,

served, that the forming particular friendships, especially those of the closest kind, consisting in an harmony of temper, professions of the warmest affections, and union of interests, is left in the scripture (though giving some shining examples of such a friendship, and some rules about the choice of friends) to every man's liberty and discretion, as a voluntary thing to be engaged in or not, and in such a way and manner as may best suit each one's circumstances, without being made express matter of duty to any. And it is wisely and reasonably thus left to a prudential choice: for the truth is, the contracting intimate alliances with any of our fellow-creatures, is not properly a moral obligation, but rather a matter of private convenience and pleasure, to which consequently as men are strongly enough inclined by the frame of their nature in some or other degree, it were as needless to prescribe it as a duty, as its being of itself no point of morality would make it improper.

But now, friendships of one kind or another there are and will be in the world, and almost every man has some whom he has peculiar obligations to for favours received, whom he most frequently and freely converses with, and whom he esteems and has reason to account his friends more than the rest of mankind. Friendships likewise where they obtain are a proper means of promoting and exalting benevolence; they afford fuller scope and better security for exercising some of the highest and tenderest instances of philanthropy, than the world at large, mere neighbourhood, or a common acquaintance can do. Here then reason and scripture too come in to regulate our conduct, when friendships are formed and subsist, requiring that it be mutually friendly, according to the nature and terms of the friendship.

Let this then be the first rule for the due managing friendship, to be agreed on the terms, and neither to raise nor to take up expectations beyond the just intention and import of them. It is a very heinous fault in one extreme, which some men allow themselves in, that they make large professions of friendship and kindness to others, which they never design or take any care to make good. They are friends to all who apply to them, as far as fine promises, and fair unmeaning words go, only to rid themselves of importunity, and it may be, to laugh at the credulity and simplicity of those who have trusted them. This is so egregious trifling with the sacred name of friendship, such an outrage on all integrity and fidelity, that a truly conscientious person, far from profaning friendship at this rate, will rather chuse to declare less than he intends, and to do more than he has declared, than to profess more and do less.

On the other hand, some are as extravagant in their claims and pretensions, beyond all the bounds of the correspondence that has passed between themselves and others. Through weakness or vanity they affect to reckon men of merit in the number of their friends, boast on very slight grounds of their esteem, favour, and intimacy, and construe a pleasant look, a kind obliging word, and the commonest marks of civility, into a sure sign of an extraordinary value and special regard for them. And thus, while they create disappointment and uneasiness to themselves, they become troublesome to others, nay and injurious too, by complaints of hard measures, whenever their unreasonable and ill-grounded expectations are not complied with.

II. It is the unquestionable office of friendship, for a person to use his utmost endeavours to answer the confidence he has suffered another to repose in him

him. Whatever engagements there may be between me and another, I treat him as a friend in this very instance, when I accept a trust from him; though the ties of amity between us might not be so strait, before, that I could not without a breach of them have refused it. Is it a secret seriously committed to me to keep, or such private conversation which its own nature sufficiently declares to be unfit to be divulged, especially in certain places and companies? I must then preserve inviolably, and with a religious silence, what is so spoken under charge of secrecy, under the seal of friendly confidence, which I quite destroy and shew myself utterly unfit for, if through indiscretion, importunity, a talkative humour, and much more through any bad design, I am drawn to disclose it. Or, is it any pledge somewhat of value, that is deposited in my hands for safe custody? I owe to him who has intrusted me with it, the greatest care and diligence to keep it from harm and loss, and a ready restitution when it is called in, which is a point of justice too, as well as friendship. Is it any business, that my friend has committed to my management, and which I have accordingly undertaken for him? I am bound by the law of friendship, to prosecute it with the same assiduity and activity, as if it were my own.

So then, in all particular cases wherein the confidence of a friend is given and taken, fidelity must be strictly maintained. This is so due in itself, and so much depended on, that a violation of it leaves a brand of just reproach and infamy on the guilty person for his baseness and treachery, and a wound in the spirit of the unhappy sufferer, piercing deeper than the inconvenience or loss itself he may sustain.

“ Confidence in an unfaithful man, (as the wise
“ man.

“ man observes, is like a broken tooth, and a foot
“ out of joint.” Prov. xxv. 19.

III. Another duty to friends, is to observe a decency and respectfulness in our own language and behaviour to them, together with a candid interpretation of their words and actions. It is indeed the office of humanity and charity at large, to think and speak the best of all men. We are to “ speak
“ evil of no man.” Tit. iii. 2. But where there is a friendly intercourse and reciprocation of offices between us and others, where we have received favours from them, or live with them in the freedoms of conversation, we ought to be extremely tender of their ease and character, and use more than ordinary care not to expose and render them contemptible to others, or uneasy within themselves, by saying or doing what may seem to bear hard on them; and that not only when they are present, but as much when they are absent, at which times as our friendship is put most to the trial, so we must be peculiarly on our guard not to betray it. Hence, all backbitings, taking pleasure in publishing faults and infirmities, severe invectives, or sly insinuations and secret practices against those we have owned as friends, and perhaps owe many obligations to, must be utterly renounced as flatly repugnant to the very show of friendship, and proving all professions of it to be hollow and hypocritical. No more should the sallies of refined satyr, and witty raillery, be too freely indulged. However innocently and pleasantly they may be meant, yet they ought to be suppressed, if they have any real tendency to make our friends appear in a ridiculous light, or their temper and present turn of mind is like to dispose them to receive grating impressions from them.

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As thus we must be cautious not to blemish the reputation, or disturb the repose of our friends ourselves, so we should be ready to patronize and defend them against the reflections and injurious treatment they may meet with from others: far from basely taking a part in, or even patiently observing, a popular cry against them, and an unjust run on their good name, it becomes us manfully to withstand it. And as to their real faults, (which who is without?) it is the part of friendship, and even humanity itself, first to veil them from public notice as far as possible; and then, if they happen to get abroad, to offer all the alleviations and extenuations in their favour, which the truth of things will allow, and particular circumstances with the general frailty of human nature suggest.

On the other hand, in order to the due effect of the sincerest good-will and endeavours of one friend to carry it blamelessly and honourably to another, mutual jealousy, the great bane of friendship, must be guarded against. The most favourable construction should be put on passages that look unkind and suspicious. When our expectations are not answered, let us suppose that equal or superior engagements elsewhere, some accidental reasons, or human infirmities, rather than any falsehood or ill design, have occasioned it. We should demur for some time on reports to the prejudice of our friends, till we have an opportunity of knowing the certain truth; nay, and be ready to pass by offences of a slighter nature.

IV. All flattery must be banished from friendship, as entirely inconsistent with the true notion and laudable end of it. It is certain that this can never do them any good towards whom it is used; but it may, and most probably will do them a great deal of harm, by cherishing in them pride and vanity,
and

and countenancing them in sin; while it betrays in those who are guilty of it a sordid design of serving some private interest of their own, by the weakness of others. On the contrary, counsel, admonition, and reproof, even to the venturing to displease for the present, rather than to suffer tamely a friend to bring guilt, shame, and mischief on himself, are very becoming and useful parts of friendship, and an argument of sincere and disinterested love. For "faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," Prov. xxvii. 6. And such a faithful friendly love will dictate the doing this ungrateful, though necessary office, with that prudence and judicious choice of proper seasons and proper faults, and with that gentleness and tenderness that it may appear a kindness in the design of the reprover not proceeding from any affected superiority of censoriousness, and become in effect a kindness to the reprov'd, whose part correspondently it is to take it well, and seek to profit by it. Need I add,

V. That such offices as these belong to friendship: a readiness to serve those we live on these terms with, according to the demands of our correspondence; even first and freely where they stand in need of our assistance, with some self-denial and difficulty to ourselves, and without a nice and scrupulous balancing of accounts, which carries a very unfriendly aspect: a grateful acknowledgment of favours received, without denying or diminishing them, because our desires are not always gratified, together with a forwardness to oblige in our turn, and within our power, those who have first and most obliged us: a common sense of joys and sorrows; a constancy to our engagements, so as not to break with our friends through fickleness and levity of spirit on slight and trifling occasions, especially

cially not to withdraw from them in a time of adversity: and an improvement of all friendships and familiarities of converse for the mutual strengthening and aiding of religion and virtue.

And can we now on this detail of friendly duties and offices forbear to recollect the noble and disinterested friendship of that best divine and human friend our Lord Jesus Christ? What a gracious and loving friend did he shew himself to our world, by laying down his life for men, even when they were enemies to God and himself? And from the time that a spiritual alliance commences between him and any of the children of men, by a consent gained on their part; he never fails in one article of useful and kind friendship to them, but is always taking care of, and promoting their best interests. Nay, he causes his love eminently to shine forth in that more difficult part of forgiving offences, such offences and affronts which would justly dissolve all human alliances. Let us seek above all things to secure to ourselves this heavenly Friend, who does and will indeed love at all times, and make up for the want of other friends, and for the defects or faults of those we have: let us cultivate more and more friendly intercourses with him, both in deriving down the communications of his grace into our souls, and in making becoming returns of love and chearful obedience to him: and let us make him our motive and pattern for acquitting ourselves well of all we owe on the score of friendship to any of our fellow creatures. For this end we may consider him, even as man, assuming this character in a special manner. He took to himself out of the twelve, one disciple for his particular friend. This was the honour and title of the apostle John: he whom Jesus loved, loved in a more intimate and familiar

familiar manner than the rest, as one who, no doubt, nearest resembled himself in all those soft and tender qualities that form the most comfortable, virtuous, and useful friendship.

A very few words will suffice for the

Third class of equals, brothers and sisters, and the duties that belong to them mutually. This relation is formed by nature itself, and not by choice; it has a great many things in common, more than are between neighbours or even friends; (except those who have contracted the strictest intimacy) and it is prior to those other bands. Consequently nature and reason as well as scripture dictates, that there should be a peculiar affection, with very kind effects of it, passing between those that are thus related together. Yet one is not obliged to make a brother or a sister an intimate or bosom friend in preference to one not a kin. Besides a variety of outward circumstances that will not often admit of so close a correspondence here, diversity of temper, and want of suitable qualifications, may render it unsafe and improper. It is easy to perceive how the proper parts of friendship and fraternity are distinct; though they may also mingle well together, and such a conjunction where it happens adds a lustre to the relation. The chief aim of friendship is agreeable and improving conversation. Among brethren an hearty love of benevolence, an ardent concern for each other's welfare and interest, a readiness to serve and promote it, are the peculiar offices to be attended to; wherein, though friends too, are to have a share, yet the claim of kindred is ordinarily first and strongest*. Nor only must brotherly

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love

* *Necessaria præsidia vitæ debentur iis maxime, quos ante dixi (i. e. propinquis) vita autem, victusque communis, consilia, Sermones, &c. in amicitiiis vigent maxime. Cic. de Offic.*

love exert itself in desires and endeavours for the outward good and prosperity of our kindred; it should be expressed also in earnest solicitude, and labours for their conversion and salvation.

I shall only add, that it should be a special care of brethren to cultivate peace among themselves. For "behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psal. cxxxiii.

1. But how unnatural and unseemly are quarrels and contentions among such? Gen. xiii. 8. And yet there is need of a great deal of caution for this purpose, because of the propensity there is in those who live much together on a level, to fall into strife and variance.

I come now in the

Fourth and last place, to the duties of the conjugal relation; a relation of the greatest intimacy of all others, which comprehends all the sweets and endearments of the strictest friendship, especially where it obtains between discreet, virtuous, and worthy persons; and wherein a certain superiority of one of the parties is so tempered with an equality in other respects between both by reason of the near union of their persons and interests, that it founds and requires duties common on both sides, as well as some distinct and peculiar to each. And,

I. There are duties equally and alike incumbent on both husband and wife; such as,

1. Love to each other's persons. Though love in scripture is especially enjoined to husbands, yet wives are likewise to be taught to love, and are "to care how to please their husbands." Tit. ii. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 23, 34. What true conjugal happiness can there be without a reciprocal strong affection? and how without it can the many careful and difficult offices of a married life be duly discharged?

discharged? but this will facilitate and sweeten all. Besides, is it not expected, nay, and promised on both sides? so that nothing, no not the fairest, civilest, kindest usage, can be an equivalent for the want of cordial love, where it is perceived to be absent. With this therefore must the conjugal relation commence; and no considerations should induce persons to enter into it, without a good liking or esteem of one another. And this, as the life and soul of it, must be maintained with the greatest care and diligence ever after, whatever infirmities, changes, and cross-accidents may fall out, by all ingratiating and endearing methods, and by guarding against every thing that may threaten to impair it.

2. A strict care about maintaining peace is another common conjugal duty. An hearty mutual love is indeed a promising and hopeful means to this end; nor can it be reasonably expected where this is wanting. Yet neither will this always prevent dissensions and animosities; but as it will certainly give a greater edge to them when they arise, so itself by degrees may be damped and extinguished by their frequently happening among those who are so nearly allied, especially if they continue long, and are carried to great heights. In order therefore to preserve peace and love together, both parties should habituate themselves to soft and kind expressions and actions, looking on all words of bitterness and disdain, especially of the grosser kind, (not to say also injurious deeds) as monstrous, and in the highest degree unsuitable. They should watch also against taking offence; by all due and reasonable allowances for difference of sentiments and temper, as well as for various discomposing accidents, and by the practice of much mutual forbearance, without

narrowly criticising every unguarded word and step that may proceed from surprises, or easily admitting jealousies and suspicions of unkindness. And then whenever any impressions of uneasiness or displeasure are made on either party, let them speedily be removed by a condescending and soothing carriage in the other, instead of eagerly vindicating the thing that has given the offence.

3. Cohabitation, and the inviolable preservation of conjugal fidelity and chastity, is a bond of equal obligation on the husband as well as the wife. By the marriage-contract they pass over their right in themselves to their partners, and become each other's property; a property of the most nice and tender sort, which cannot be alienated, without the highest injustice done to the party injured, and such a wrong as is not to be repaired. However human laws and customs have been more favourable to one sex transgressing in this case than to the other, and the falshood of the wife may be in itself the more heinous and infamous crime; yet the law of God and of nature allows no dispensation to the man more than to the woman, and rates his offence of this kind among the most capital and scandalous. Is not adultery literally and expressly forbidden in one of the ten commands, which, who ever presumed to be made for one sex, and not as much for the other?

4. Endeavours must be used by both parties to promote each other's interest as one common interest. In their worldly concerns, it can scarce be otherwise, but that they rise and fall together; and the remissness or extravagance of either will greatly affect them. Should they not then employ their common care? though the chief part for maintaining the family ordinarily lies on the husband, yet it is the duty of the wife to be assist-
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ing to him therein, where and as far as she can; and she has too for her more proper province a variety of domestick cares and labours, on the right management of which, the preservation and increase of the substance depends in a good measure, as well as on the industry of the man. Thus how full of constant and diligent employment, with the reputable and advantageous fruits of it, is the amiable character of the virtuous and good wife, in Prov. xxxi. So that "the heart of her husband
" doth safely trust in her, while she will do him
" good and not evil all the days of her life; while
" she looketh well to the ways of her household,
" and eateth not the bread of idleness," ver. 11, 12, 27. With regard to the spiritual interest, if there be any just sense of it at all in married persons, they will readily acknowledge a strong obligation on them jointly to pursue it in their own souls as well as in their family. With these views they ought to come together. With these should they dwell together as "heirs of the grace
" of life," in the united exercises of religion and virtue, praying with and for each other, frequently conferring on divine things, strengthening one another's hands in works of piety and goodness, and with so much the more exactness attending to all their other offices, that these their prayers and religious endeavours may not be hindered. O how pleasant and lovely are such husbands and wives in their lives! and after death they shall not be divided. The overwhelming uneasiness of the contrary thought, joined with the snare it may be to a person's self, and the hindrance of religion in a family, should be a reason of weight with one who fears God, not to admit, for so intimate a partner, one void of all religion. Yet still in so ill-formed an alliance, it must be the more abundant care of the religious party, by the most exemplary and condescending

scending conduct, and by all prudent methods, to strive to win over the other to the love and practice of piety, as the apostles Paul and Peter direct in this case, 1 Cor. vii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

II. There are special and distinct duties of the husband and wife respectively; one main and principal duty for each, though not so much a single as a complex one, which is to tincture and run thro' the whole conversation of either party.

1st then, For the wife, -her proper and peculiar part is obedience and submission to her husband. "Wives, submit yourselves, be in subjection to your own husbands," are the commands of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, Eph. v. 22, 23. 1 Pet. iii. 1. In pursuance of this submission, the wife, far from contradicting, must make all her deportment to confess the superiority and headship of her husband. For the man is indeed "the head of the woman," 1 Cor. xi. 3. "And let the wife then see that she reverence her husband; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. Eph. v. 33. 1 Pet. iii. 6. "Let the woman learn with silence in all subjection: For I suffer not, (says St Paul,) a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man." 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

This must be expressed likewise in all her desires and advice to her husband. It may be well presumed to be a privilege to the latter to take, as it is of the former to give advice in innumerable cases; and a great regard, doubtless, is due to the desires of so intimate a companion. But then, let them be no more than desires, no more than advice; if they be offered sometimes with earnestness and importunity, yet never let them be urged in an imperious manner, but always with that mildness and modesty, with that humility and deference, which are necessary to preserve a grace, and most likely to give a force

force to them. No point must be attempted to be gained by authority or clamour. The wife's only and sufficient law is "the law of kindness in her mouth." And methinks, when nature has formed the sex with such advantages for persuasion in a soft and gentle way, it is as imprudent as it is unnatural to leave it for that of imperiousness, violence, and vociferation, and to exchange the graces which nature has made of her train for the furies.

Finally, it must be exercised in her yielding to the declared and known will of her husband, in quiet silence, without rage, peevishness, or fullness, but as much as possible with a placid composure of mind.

2. For the husband, his proper and peculiar part is to love his wife, and that even as himself, Eph. v. 25, 28, 33. Col. iii. 19. To rule the wife is not made in scripture the distinguishing province of the husband: this is left implied in the prescription to her of subjection; nor is it so proper to call the governing party to the exercise of his power, which he is generally ready enough for of himself, as to regulate it. Love therefore is fitly and only recommended to the husband, who being the superior, may be most likely to think himself dispensed with in it; and that hereby he may recompense and render more easy the submission of the wife. Love also on the husband's part has some particular measures of condescension in it; and where it is strong, and managed with prudence, it will secure his doing his whole part well.

Now this must be shewn in the management of his authority. His authority must not be indeed sunk in a fond love; and no more must his love be lost in an overbearing authority: but they should temper and correct the one the other. His love, as one says, must be a governing love, and his commands

mands loving commands. By no means should he affect to make a show of his superiority at all times, even on the most trifling occasions, (nothing being more truly ridiculous than to command for commanding sake;) but for the most part he should content himself to desire rather than to enjoin, and try to gain over reason and consent by proper arguments, rather than arbitrarily exact a compliance with his will.

It must appear also in maintaining and supporting the wife's dignity and authority as next to his own in the family, and securing to her her proper share of government over children and servants.— And then in making the best provision for her he can, both during his own life, and in case of his prior decease.

In a word, it must be full of tenderness, condescension and forbearance. “Husbands, (says St Paul,) love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” Neither speak nor act any thing toward them with design, or which has a tendency to distaste, exasperate, or grieve them. Labour to be as superior in love as in authority; and remember, that in many instances, according to St Peter's exhortation, you are “to do honour to the wife, as to,” and because she is, “the weaker vessel.”

SERMON

S E R M O N XLIX.

Christian Fellowship, with its Duties and Advantages.

ROMANS XV. 6, 7.

That ye may with one mind, and with one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ---Receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us to the glory of God.

FOR Christians to join themselves in particular societies or congregations, in order to carry on the great interests of religion, appears to be both a duty and a privilege: it stands upon just foundations as a duty, and as a privilege 'tis attended with excellent advantages. I confess the words of my text chiefly design to teach us what is the particular rule whereby this practice should be conducted, and who should be the persons thus joined together in holy fellowship, even the Gentiles who are converted to Christ, as well as the Jews: yet the general duty is plainly intimated, viz. that those who profess the name of Christ, and

have reason to hope that Christ has received them, should also receive one another into mutual communion in all the social parts and privileges of the Christian religion, "that with one mind, and with one mouth they may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In my discourse on this subject, I shall endeavour to set before you these several things.

I. The reasonableness of this practice.

II. Some special advantages that arise from it.

III. The characters of the persons more particularly of whom this is required, and in what numbers they should unite together to make a Christian church.

IV. The duties of persons thus united in Christian societies or churches.

V. I shall mention the officers which Christ has appointed in his churches to perform peculiar services therein.

First, We are to consider the reasonableness of this practice, whereby it will appear to be the duty of those who profess the religion of Christ to agree together, and form themselves into particular societies.

The first reason is this, That without such an agreement to unite together in the practice of Christianity, there can be no such thing as public worship regularly maintained among Christians, nor public honours paid to God in the name of Jesus. Now the worship of God in public assemblies is so necessary for his honour in all ages, and under all dispensations, and was so carefully practised among the primitive Christians by the authority of Christ and his apostles, that we cannot be excused from it, if we profess ourselves to believe in Christ. This has been made sufficient-

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ly evident in a former discourse. And if there be such a thing as public worship maintained, the light of nature shews us there must be some certain time, and some certain place appointed by agreement among such worshippers, since no one Christian that I know of has any authority given by the scripture to appoint precisely the times and places, and magisterially to impose them upon his brethren.

As for the place under the Jewish dispensation, God himself appointed the tabernacle in the days of Moses, and the temple in the time of Solomon, as sacred places for public sacrifices, and some peculiar solemnities of worship; but the sacredness of places is now at an end, as our Lord informs us, John iv. 21, 24.; and even during that dispensation, the synagogues throughout the land where God was weekly worshipped by the people, were built and frequented by the agreement or consent of the people, as the light of nature directed; and the worship of Christian churches is more a-kin to that of the synagogues than that of the temple.

As for the time, the first day of the week is the Christian day of worship by apostolick appointment: but Christians must agree together upon the hour, as well as the day, in order to unite in the several parts of worship.

Without such an agreement of Christians among themselves, there could be no celebration of public ordinances in a becoming manner, no united prayers and praises could ascend to heaven, there would be no social attendance upon the word preached, no participation of the great ordinance of the Lord's supper, which is a part of social religion, a sacred feast of representation of the blessed communion which Christians have both with Christ their Lord, and with one another. For this reason, they must agree upon the place to meet in,

“that the whole church may come together in one place,” as 1 Cor. xi. 20. and they must agree upon one hour, or “tarry for one another” till they are come, 1 Cor. xi. 33.

The second reason for such a practice is this, (*viz.*) Without an agreement to keep up such societies for worship, the doctrines of Christ and his gospel could not be so constantly and so extensively held forth to the world, and there would be no rational hope of the continuance or increase of Christianity among men. Particular Christians die out of this world from day to day, and there would be few rising up in their stead if there were not public assemblies appointed or agreed upon: 'tis in these assemblies the gospel, with all the duties and blessings thereof, is published to the world; 'tis here unbelievers may attend and hear the glorious truths of the gospel set forth in a proper light, and the name and memory, the person and offices, the graces and glories of our great Redeemer are displayed among men, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. “When the whole church is come together to one place, there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers,” and when the important affairs of Christianity are managed with becoming order and decency, and the doctrines of our salvation are set forth in a happy light, “They that believe not are convinced, the secrets of their hearts are made manifest, they will worship God together with us, and report that God is among us of a truth:” Hereby those that are convinced of their sin and danger, and have fled for refuge to lay hold on Jesus as their only hope, are encouraged to come and join themselves to the church, when they behold the beauty of the Lord in his gospel-sanctuary, and the appearances of his power there.

In short, I might add, that there is no public religion, no worship of any kind, can be well maintained in the world, without such an agreement among the persons that profess that religion: even Heathens, and Turks, and Jews, all sorts of worshippers in every age, think it necessary to agree to worship their God in particular societies, and thereby maintain their religious communion with each other.

It is granted indeed, that where a national religion is established by the authority of the magistrate, and the times, and places, and modes of worship are appointed by him, together with the persons who shall minister therein throughout the several cities, towns, and villages in that nation, there is no such necessity for private persons to form an express agreement amongst themselves about this matter, if their consciences lead them to the same worship and practice which the magistrate requires: their constant willing attendance implies such an agreement. But I can find no power of imposing this public worship given to magistrates, among all the principles of natural reason, nor among any of the writings of the New Testament: and those persons whose consciences lead them to differ from this established religion are then directed by the light of nature, as well as scripture, to form such agreements among themselves, in order to maintain Christian worship, and the practice of Christianity, as they find it represented in the Bible.

The second thing I proposed was to shew you some of the advantages of such an agreement for Christian fellowship, and among others I might mention such as these,

1. It gives courage to every Christian to profess and practise his religion, when many persons are engaged

engaged by mutual agreement in the same profession and practice. We don't love to be singular, and to be pointed at by the world, as standing and acting alone, especially in the affairs of God and religion; but when a good company unite themselves together for such a sacred purpose, this takes away the reproach of singularity; they all strengthen one another's hands in the ways of the Lord, and they bear up with more firmness of heart against the reproaches of the world.

2. 'Tis more for the particular edification of Christians, that such societies should be formed, where the word of Christ is constantly preached, where the ordinances of Christ are administered, and the religion of Christ is held forth in a social and honourable manner to the world. Hereby every Christian knows where to go to hear the gospel preached, and multitudes are instructed at once in the great things that relate to their eternal peace: hereby those who have known the things of Christ more easily call to mind what they have learned, and are admonished of their daily duty by the public preacher: here their prayers are united, and their songs of praise; and such an union of prayers and praises is delightful and acceptable to Him who inhabits the praises of Israel, and who has encouraged them to agree in asking mercies from God, and to strive together in prayer. United devotions are much more likely to obtain success.

3. Such a holy fellowship and agreement to walk together in the ways of Christ, is a happy guard against backsliding and apostacy, it is a defence against the temptations of the world, and the defilements of a sinful age. Having given my name up to Christ in a public manner, how shall I dare to renounce him? Having joined myself to the followers

lowers of Christ, how shall I break those bonds, and depart from them, or disgrace that holy fellowship by any known sin? Having made a public profession of my avowed obedience to Jesus as a Lord and King, how can I dare decline his service, or indulge myself in those iniquities which his gospel forbids?

4. Christians thus united together by mutual acquaintance and agreement, can give each other better assistance in every thing that relates to religion, whether public or private: they warm one another's hearts by mutual holy conversation; they support one another when ready to fall, and raise and "restore those that are fallen in a spirit of meekness." But as Solomon warns us, "wo to him that falls while he walks alone, who shall help him up? or how can one be warm alone?" Eccles. iv. 10. Hand joining in hand adds force and strength, assistance and stability to any purpose or design whatsoever; and frequent meeting together gives fellow-Christians an opportunity of exhorting one another to maintain their common Christianity, as in Heb. x. 25. "For sake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works." Christians, when they come to mutual acquaintance and agreements of this kind, they afford better help to one another, when under difficulties by advice, and under sorrows they relieve each other by Christian consolation and social prayers. They afford greater aid and strength to each other, against temptations and dangers, because they are better informed of each other's circumstances and tempers. They know one another's wants and weaknesses more, they pity one another with more tenderness, and they guard each other against the common injuries and insults of men.

men. Happy the persons who are thus united in the fellowship of the gospel, and who by practising these duties, and communicating and enjoying these advantages, cast a glory upon the gospel of Christ.

The third general head leads me to enquire more particularly, "Who are the persons who should thus receive one another in the Lord, or join together in Christian fellowship." The general direction of the New Testament is contained in the words of my text, that we should receive into this sacred communion all that Christ has received to partake of his salvation, and that we make no other test whereby to receive persons into our particular congregations, than a credible profession of those things which Christ has made necessary in order to partake of his benefits. "Receive ye one another as Christ hath received us," whether ye be Jews or Greeks, whether ye be bond or free, whatsoever different character ye sustain in the civil life, or whatever different nations gave you birth. Whosoever makes a credible profession to have received Jesus Christ and his gospel, and their practice be correspondent with their profession, they are to be received by us, though they may differ in particular opinions, or in particular practices, which are of less moment and importance. This is one great design of St Paul's xivth chapter to the Romans. In his day there were some Christians that maintained a regard to the Jewish ceremonies, there were others who thought themselves entirely delivered from all those yokes of bondage; some eat meat with freedom, while others only eat herbs; some observed particular days as holy, while others neglected to observe them; some were weak in the faith, and others strong; but they are all called to receive one another into Christian fellowship, and not make these

these doubtful disputations a bar to their sacred union ; “ for the kingdom of God is not meat and “ drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in “ the Holy Ghost ; and he that in these things “ veth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved “ of men,” and therefore he should not be excluded from Christian societies, Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 17, 18.

This I say is the general rule : but it must be confessed, that there are some Christians whose sentiments are so directly contrary to others, in matters of worship or discipline, that it is hardly possible they should unite in public worship ; as for instance, he that believes prescribed forms of prayer to be an unlawful thing, cannot join with a society who never pray but by prescribed forms : he that thinks no man can be a minister unless he be ordained by the hand of a Diocesan bishop, cannot unite in worship with a society whose ministers never had nor desired such an ordination. But let each take heed how they embrace such limiting principles. There are others who differ so widely in some of the most important doctrines of Christianity, that they cannot worship together with any tolerable edification or comfort, (*viz.*) Those who believe Christ died as a proper sacrifice of atonement for sin, and venture their whole hope of salvation upon it, and wait for sanctifying influences from the Holy Spirit, cannot comfortably unite with such sort of Christians as suppose Christ to be only a messenger and prophet sent to restore natural religion to men, and who deny any atoning virtue to his death, or any influences from the Spirit to change their hearts, and make them holy. These are articles which I take to be matters of so high importance in the religion of the gospel, that I cannot advise persons to unite in societies for worship, where they are no better a-

greed in their principles: the humble and sincere believer of the gospel of Christ, would find his devotion and his edification continually interrupted by such jarring opinions and contests, and the whole work of preaching, prayer, and praise would be very disgustful to one part, while it pleases the other. How is it possible "two should walk together, except they are *better* agreed?" Amos iii. 3. They agree indeed in the name of Christianity, but their real religion seems to be of a different kind.

The general advice which I would give as most conformable to the sentiments of the great apostle, is this, Let every person take heed that he does not too much enlarge, nor too much narrow the principles of Christianity, that he does not make any article of faith or practice more or less necessary than scripture has made it, and that he does not raise needless scruples in his own breast, nor in the hearts of others, by too great a separation from such as our common Lord has received.

I proceed now to consider how great the number of persons should be, which may properly form such a Christian society; and in answer to this question, I must say, it is left very much to the liberty and prudence of men. In general, there should be so many as to give it the name of a public assembly: and yet if there are but a few Christians within the reach of one another, who can conveniently meet once a week at the same time and the same place, for religious purposes, I think these may join themselves in Christian fellowship, and the promise of our Saviour belongs to them, "where two or three of you are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20.

We might also observe, that no more should usually join together in one society than can frequently meet together in one place at one time,
and

and be edified by the mouth of one preacher, or lift up their joint prayers and praises to God by the lips of one minister: and perhaps the very words of my text may include that meaning, "Receive one another, that with one mind and one mouth you may glorify God the Father." The Corinthian church met together in one place, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. And while one spoke in prayer, prophecy, or exhortation, the others were called to silence and attention. *ver.* 31.

Now a company of Christians thus agreeing in the most important articles of faith and practice, and consenting to unite together to worship God through Jesus Christ in all his ordinances, and to keep up the Christian interest in the world, are properly a church of Christ. Such was the church of Corinth, such the church at Philippi, such the several churches of Galatia, and the churches of Asia, of which mention is made in the New Testament; * and their agreement to worship and walk together in Christian fellowship, is that church-covenant which in the very nature of things is necessary to constitute a regular Christian society, and to maintain the gospel in the world in the principles

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* It is granted the scripture sometimes speaks of *a church in the house*, which is smaller than that of a public assembly, unless it mean that the Christians of one place met together in that house for worship. Sometimes it speaks of *the church at Jerusalem*, which in the first formation of it seems to be of a larger extent than could worship in one place, as consisting of many thousand souls: but we must remember, that the national church of the Jews could not be supposed all at once to be dissolved so as to form itself into particular congregations, with all that regularity and order which afterward was observed in single Christian Societies: or perhaps the whole *church* may be sometimes used to signify all the Christians that dwell either in one city or in one house, without regard to any such special agreement of walking or worshipping together.

principles and practices of it : Nor can there be any Christian communion maintained in an orderly manner, without such a covenant or agreement as this is, either more plainly expressed, or necessarily implied : 'tis only the addition of some things which Christ has not required to such a covenant or agreement as this is, that has exposed the name of a church covenant to so many reproaches in the world : otherwise, I am sure it deserves none.

The fourth head I proposed, was to represent some of the duties which plainly arise from such an agreement of Christians to walk and worship together, for the support of their religion.

May we not say, that all the duties which the disciples of Christ owe to their fellow Christians throughout the world, are more particularly incumbent upon those who are united by their own consent in the same religious society ? Such as to love one another, to assist, comfort, and succour one another in things that relate to this life, or the life to come, to watch over and warn one another lest any fall into sin ; to admonish one another in love, and to restore those that are fallen with holy tenderness, and in general to fulfil all kind and friendly offices to each other, in vindication of their common faith, and in the practice of pure religion. We are commanded “ to do good “ to all men, especially to the household of faith,” Gal. vi. 10. and what is due to all the churches of Christ on earth, seems more particularly due to the church of which we are members, because these are within the reach of our notice and our assistance, and we expect the same friendly offices from them, since we have mutually given up ourselves to one another in the Lord.

2. Those

2. Those who are united by such an agreement, ought most usually to attend on the public assemblies and ministrations of that church, where it can be done with reasonable conveniency; for we have joined ourselves in society for this very purpose. 'Tis granted indeed, that many particular circumstances in life may give a just occasion for persons, more or less, frequently to join with other churches in their solemnities, which it would be too large at present to reckon up; but if upon every trivial humour we absent ourselves from that worship, and those ministrations which we have agreed to support, it has a tendency to destroy that very fellowship which we engage to maintain; and if each take their liberty in this respect, without just reason, to wander where they please, the minister may preach to the bare walls, nor can any ordinances be celebrated with constancy and honour.

I might add also, that the constant attendance upon the same ministry is the way to obtain a more uniform and regular knowledge of the whole scheme of Christianity, since 'tis to be supposed that there is more uniformity in the sentiments of the same preacher, upon the several parts of the Christian doctrine, and that in a course of years he will run through the various articles of faith and practice.

2. 'Tis the duty of persons thus united to maintain their church or society, by receiving in new members amongst them by a general consent. Now when persons profess that they believe all the necessary and most important articles of the Christian faith, when they declare they have solemnly given up themselves to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their Lord, according to the requirements of the gospel, and when they engage to walk in all the ordinances of Christ, and desire to join with that

that particular society, 'tis the business and duty of the members thereof to receive such professors, supposing always that their good character in life gives a probable witness to the truth and sincerity of their profession. My text bids the converted "Romans receive one another in the Lord, as "Christ has received them," and every church should receive such as desire to join with them upon these principles.

4. In order to keep the church pure from sin and scandal, they should separate themselves from those that walk disorderly, who are guilty of gross and known sins," 2 Thess. iii. 6. They should reprove them with just severity, as the offence deserves; and if the crime be such as makes void their profession, they should be cast out of the church, or excommunicated, as the Corinthian offender, who committed incest, was cast out by his brethren, when the church was gathered together at the order of the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 7, 11, 13. "They "must put away wicked persons from among "them," lest they be charged with encouraging or indulging iniquity. When there are settled elders or ministers among them, these ought to go before the church, in a way of advice and direction according to the will of Christ, and by their lips persons should be received into, or cast out of the congregation: this is called the discipline of the church. Yet 'tis still to be deemed an act of the church; for Paul's epistles, which are written to the churches, require them to receive worthy members, and they are required to cast out those who are proved to be unworthy: therefore this sentence inflicted on the Corinthian sinner is called "the punishment that was inflicted by many," 2 Cor. ii. 6. and in the 7th and 8th verses, the church,

church is commanded to forgive and receive him again upon his deep repentance.

5. 'Tis necessary that officers be chosen by the church, to fulfil several services in it and for it. What person will take upon him constantly to speak in prayer, and be as the mouth of the people to God? Who shall preach, and be as the mouth of God to the people? Who shall baptize and administer the Lord's supper? Who shall take care of a place for worship, or provide bread and wine for the Lord's table? Who shall collect and distribute the money of the church to the minister or the poor, if no particular persons are appointed for these purposes? But how many sorts of officers belong to a Christian church, and what their distinct services are, shall be shewn under the next general head.

6. 'Tis the duty of those whose circumstances will afford it, to contribute of their earthly substance toward the common expences of the society; *i. e.* for the provision of the place of worship, the maintenance of the minister, the support of the poor, and for every thing that relates to the outward preservation and interests of the church: and each one should give according to his ability: this is but a piece of common justice, and 'tis sometimes fit to tell them so.

7. Shall I add, in the last place, That every thing of church affairs ought to be managed with decency and order, with harmony and peace? So the apostle directs the Corinthians, Epist. i. chap. xiv. 40. and chap. xvi. 14. "Let all things be done decently and in order: Let all your affairs be done with charity;" So in my text, with one mind, as well as with one mouth glorify God. It is true indeed, every man has a will, and particular sentiments and inclinations of his own; but the most common and peaceful way of determining

termining public affairs, is by the will and inclination of the major part manifested by a vote : and in matters of lesser moment 'tis generally wisest and safest to submit to such a determination of the majority, where it may be done without sin : but it is a very desirable thing, if possible, to do nothing without the unanimous approbation of those that are concerned. If there are differences arising, those who dissent from the major part, ought to be treated with all tenderness, in order to convince and persuade them to consent. But if any thing be determined by the majority, which they cannot comply with, they may peaceably make their remonstrances ; and, if they please, be dismissed from that society, or depart.

The fifth general head leads me to enquire who are the officers which Christ hath appointed in his churches ? The names of the officers are these two, which probably include all the rest, bishops and deacons ; so they are called, Phil. i. 1.

Bishops and elders in primitive times are both called *overseers* in the Greek, and seem to be the same officers, for St Paul gives Titus the several characters of a bishop, in order to direct what sort of persons should be chosen for elders. Their business is to teach and instruct, to go before the people in performing acts of worship, “ to give themselves up to the ministry of the word and prayer,” and to exhort and govern the flock ; not by their own will, nor by rules of their own invention, but only by the general rules that Christ has given, which must be applied to particular cases by their prudence, and in matters of moment they should do nothing without the consent of the society. What the difference is betwixt pastors and teachers, and whether there be any elders who only are called to rule, but not in a stated manner

to

to teach or administer ordinances in the church, I cannot now tarry to enquire or determine.

The other officers are called *deacons*, the institution whereof you find in Acts vi. and whose business it is to take care of the poor, and serve tables, *i. e.* to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister, be supplied; for the apostle informs us, that the poor must be relieved, and “they which preach the gospel must live of the gospel, so has the Lord ordained,” 1 Cor. ix. 14. and other things which relate to the convenience of such a society in their public meeting, are generally supposed to come under the care of the deacons *.

When a Christian society is furnished with such officers, it seems to have every thing within itself that is necessary to the being or well-being of a church of Christ. Here are all things that are needful, which are within the power of man, for the preservation of piety and purity among them, and

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for

* Now all these officers must be chosen by the Church: Whatsoever may be pretended to be done by the apostles themselves, or what directions soever are supposed to be given to Timothy or Titus toward the settling of churches, or ordaining of officers, by virtue of their extraordinary gifts in primitive times, without an explicit declaration of the choice of the people recorded, yet there is no authority given to any person, that I can find, to make themselves, or any other persons elders or deacons in a particular church, without their free consent: and indeed in those very primitive days, the choice of the people was plainly required towards the making of deacons, Acts vi. 3 “Look ye out among ye men of honest report,” &c. though the apostles are said to ordain them by prayer and imposition of hands, verse 6. And in the earliest histories and records we have of these matters, the people’s choice or consent was required to introduce elders or bishops into a church: nor indeed is it proper that the souls of the people, or the church’s money, should be entrusted with elders or deacons imposed upon them by others.

for the continuance of the same religion with decency and honour in a constant succession, so long as the gospel shall call in new converts out of this sinful world.

It remains only that I make a few reflections upon the present discourse.

Refl. 1. How beautiful is the order of the gospel, and the fellowship of a Christian church? How strong and plain are the foundations, and the grounds of it? It is built on eternal reason, and the relations of things, as well as on the word of God. How happy it is that the very light of nature dictates to Christians far the greatest part of those duties which church-fellowship requires, supposing still that the revealed doctrines and sacraments of Christianity are first known and acknowledged. The peculiar positive prescriptions relating to Christian churches are but few, whereas the general duties are such as reason and the light of nature seem to propose and approve in all voluntary religious societies whatsoever. If a Deist, who professes nothing but natural religion, once came so far as to receive the Christian faith and the sacraments, his reason would lead him into almost all the parts of Christian communion, which I have described. It is the evil mixture of the needless and fanciful inventions of men, with the plain and common dictates of the light of nature and scripture in public religion, and the imposition of these things upon conscience, that has been the disgrace and ruin of many Christian churches, and is an high misdemeanor against Christ, who is the Lord and King of his church. Reason and revelation are the only principles of his religion, and of the government of his kingdom.

Refl. 2. How little do they value the true interests of Christian religion, the public honour of
Christ

Christ and his gospel, or the edification and comfort of their own souls, who neglect this holy communion? There are twenty little excuses that some persons are ready to make against uniting themselves in fellowship: but let conscience do its office, and examine sincerely whether such excuses will be a sufficient apology in the great day. A late eminent divine, well known to some of us, (*viz.*) Mr Nathaniel Taylor, gives this direction to those who have given up themselves to God in Jesus Christ: "Join yourselves," says he, "as members
"to some particular church of Christ or other. For
"the better edification of his body, our Saviour
"has appointed the erecting of particular churches:
"and where-ever a sufficient number of persons were
"called, it was the constant practice of the primitive times, to unite in such societies as stated
"members of them, under the guidance and conduct of those pastors and teachers, which with
"their own consent, the Holy Ghost had set over
"them to rule and feed them. This is a constitution of Christ, which is directly thwarted and opposed by a generation of loose and rambling
"Christians, that content themselves with bare
"hearing, and that too in a very odd way. For
"they are a sort of volatile auditors, perpetually
"frisking to and fro, who can fix no where. Were
"all men of this humour, there could be no such
"thing as particular churches, which Christ has
"appointed for the edifying of his members: and
"how can they rationally expect to flourish either in
"grace or peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest institution of our Lord Jesus,
"which was not more an effect of his authority, than of his wisdom and goodness; I wish men
"would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient that you need no pastor, nor the assist-

"ance

“ance of your fellow-Christians to watch over, ad-
 “monish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen
 “and counsel you? Are there none of the churches
 “of Christ that are pure enough? none of them
 “that have latitude, or strictness enough for you?
 “none of them worthy enough for you to join
 “yourself unto? When our Lord hath given such
 “variety of gifts to his ministers, is there none of
 “them whose abilities suit you, and please your
 “curious palates, that by settling under them you
 “may be edified? I may say to such persons as
 “Constantine once did to such a self-conceited
 “man, Take a ladder, and climb up to heaven by
 “thyself alone. In short, a society of believers walk-
 “ing together in gospel order, is like the excellent
 “composition of syllables, words, and sentences,
 “that have a great deal of sense and signification
 “in them; but a separated and divided Christian,
 “that will join himself to no church, is like a sin-
 “gle letter, or disjointed syllable, that is perfect
 “nonsense.”

Ref. 3. How criminal are those persons who break
 the beautiful order and harmony of a church of
 Christ for trifles! whose fanciful humours, or
 whose imposing spirits raise up discord and con-
 test in a well-settled and peaceful church: some
 are peevish, because the church will not consent to
 let them have their own will, or because others will
 not obey their assumed power. Some affect to
 make divisions upon every little occasion, out of
 unreasonable pretences of purity and order, where
 scripture gives no plain rule. Whatever varnish
 may colour over such practice in this world, yet such
 humourous and unreasonable disturbers of the peace
 shall receive no thanks from our Lord Jesus in the
 great day, whether they be pastors or people.

Ref. 4. When we behold a society of Christians
 flourishing

flourishing in holiness, and honourably maintaining the beauty of this sacred fellowship, let us take occasion to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world, to the church of the first-born, who are assembled on high, where everlasting beauty, order, peace, and holiness are maintained in the presence of Jesus our common Lord. And when we meet with little inconveniences, uneasiness, and contest in any church of Christ on earth, let us point our thoughts and our hopes still upward to that divine fellowship of the saints, and the spirits of the just made perfect, where contention and disorder have no place. There the glories and graces of the Redeemer, who is the head of the church, are diffused over all the happy assembly: they adore and love their God and their Saviour with supreme fervency, and they love one another with pure affection; their hearts and souls are one, and they rejoice in the love of God, and in the presence of the Lamb for ever.

SERMON

SERMON L.

The Pleasure and advantage of Vital Religion.

ROMANS VII. 22.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

BY the law of God, we may here understand the whole of natural and revealed religion, for the light of nature is the law of God written in the heart, and revelation is the law written in our Bibles ; these are the delight of a renewed soul, for of such must the inward man in our text be meant, because, in the next chapter, the same apostle says, that the “ carnal mind is enmity against God, “ and not subject to his laws, neither indeed can “ it be.” We may therefore raise this observation as the foundation of the following discourse,

That inward and vital religion is delightful and advantageous to a renewed mind.

In

In speaking to which I shall,

First, Inquire what we are to understand by vital religion. And,

Secondly, Wherein the pleasure and advantage of it consists.

First, What are we to understand by vital religion? Now this is opposed to what the apostle calls the *appearance*, or *form* of it, which, like the picture of a man, may represent his shape and likeness, though destitute of life and motion; agreeably hereunto we read of a dead faith, and of dead works; faith is dead when it does not produce the fruits of holiness, and works are dead when they do not spring from a living principle of faith. The religion of great numbers of professors consists only in making a fair shew, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, who, “when they gave alms to the poor, sounded a trumpet before them, that they might have glory from men: when they prayed, it was standing in the synagogues, or in the corners of the streets, and when they fasted they disfigured their faces, that they might appear to men to fast,” Matt. vi. 1, 2. And the same mistaken notions of religion remain to this day; for the church of Rome has dressed up Christianity with such a number of pompous rites and ceremonies, that if the apostles were to rise from the dead, they could hardly distinguish it from Pagan idolatry; but these are no parts of religion, any more than a man’s clothes are parts of himself: nor are these inventions of men acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

Vital religion is seated in the heart, and arises from such a settled principle as produces a chearful and uniform regard to all the divine laws.

1. It arises from a settled principle in the heart, whereby the holy soul is enabled to converse with God in the several ordinances of religion; as in the duty of prayer, which does not consist in the motion of the lips, or lifting up of the eyes and hands to heaven, but in the elevation of the soul towards God; according to the Psalmist, Psal. xxv.

1. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. A loud voice and warm expressions may captivate the attention, - but it is the inwrought prayer*, the prayer inspired by the Spirit of God, and sent up again to heaven, as the breath of a devout and pious heart, that prevails much, James v. 16. When we attend on the preaching of the word, it is not sufficient that it sounds in our ears, or is a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice; nor are we savingly edified, when it conveys knowledge unto the understanding, unless the affections also are moved, and the mind influenced to correspondent acts of devotion; and yet how many content themselves with having been at church, and joined in the outward service, though they are no better "than persons beholding their face "in a glass, they behold themselves and go away, "but straightway forget what manner of persons "they are:" It is the ingrafted word†, the word implanted in the heart, and which works a virtuous temper and disposition of mind, that is able to save the soul: for so it follows, James i. 21, &c. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; "for whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, shall be "blessed in his deed." The same may be said of the sacrament of the Lord's supper; the life of

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* *Νῆπιος ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ*† *Τὸν λόγον ἐμπεφυγμένον*

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that ordinance, consists not in eating bread and drinking wine, but in an affectionate meditation on the sufferings of Christ. When we eat the bread, we remember his dying agonies, and endeavour to excite in our minds suitable affections of love and thankfulness. When we receive the cup, we have a like remembrance of his precious blood for the same purposes; otherwise we do not answer the end of the institution. The refreshments Christians receive, are not derived from the elements any further than they are means and assistances of their spiritual converse with a crucified Jesus. Again, private meditation is another branch of religion, and may be called the very soul of it: holy David spent many delightful hours in contemplating the works of nature, as well as the perfection and purity of the laws of God: while the multitude were employed in the business or diversions of the day, or in the luxury and ease of the night, he retired from the world to converse with his God; and the entertainment of his mind from these solitary reflections cannot be expressed better than in his own words, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord, I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved, and I will meditate in thy statutes; for I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad." This is the real essence of religion, without which the external part is but a dead body, or a mere form of godliness.

2. Vital religion in the heart will always produce an uniform obedience to the laws of God in the life: as a good tree brings forth good fruit, so the grace of God will discover itself in a cheerful and ready obedience to the divine will, though ever so contrary to our former inclinations and

practices. And though we cannot look into the hearts of others, so as to distinguish between such as have a living principle within, and those who only put on the cloak of religion, we may certainly discover it in ourselves by the following characters.

1. By the spring from whence our obedience flows: the hypocrite puts on the face of religion to advance his interest and reputation; but true evangelical obedience flows from a strong and powerful persuasion of the fitness and equity of the divine laws, and of our eternal and unchangeable obligations to obey them as the proper duty and service of reasonable creatures. No other principle can render our obedience sincere and lasting, Psal. cxix. 128. "I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right," says the Psalmist, "therefore I hate every false way."

2. We may judge of the sincerity of our obedience, by the religious frame and temper of our minds; for there is a natural enmity in the hearts of all men to the laws of God, and an antipathy to every thing that is good and virtuous; but when the soul is renewed by divine grace, it receives a different turn; the understanding is so far enlightened, as to form a right judgment of its duty and interest, and to take a complacency and delight in it. The affections are changed from the love of sin to a rational delight in holiness; the ways of wisdom are now ways of pleasantness, and the soul has a taste and favour of divine things. This alteration may be easily discerned by those who will look into their own hearts, the vital principle will discover itself in all the faculties and affections, and produce sincere desires and endeavours of conformity to the will of God in all things.

3. We may judge of the nature of our obedience by the universality of it. The Pharisees tithed

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mint and anise and cummin, but neglected the weightier things of the law : they were very precise in little matters, but lax and defective in greater ; which is the case of those who do not act from a regard to God, and a principle of religion in the heart : all the laws of God are of equal obligation, not so much from their own nature, as the authority of the law-giver, which is the same in all cases ; in this sense we are to understand the apostle, when he says, He that breaks the law in one point is guilty of all, because “ the same God that forbids us to commit adultery, forbids us to kill ; “ if then we commit adultery, but do not kill, “ we are transgressors of the law,” James ii. 10. The sincere Christian has a constant prevailing inclination to all the branches of his duty, without a stated exception to any, and endeavours to comply not only with the letter, but with the spirit of the law ; for the law is spiritual, and has respect to the very frame and temper of the mind.

4. We must consider the ends of our obedience, if we would determine the acceptableness of it. Why do we serve God, and give attendance on religious duties ? Is it to be seen of men, and gain their applauses ? then verily we have our reward. Vital religion will direct us to aim at the enjoyment of the favour of God, as our supreme happiness, and to render ourselves acceptable and pleasing to him. Our Saviour recommends secret devotion, because it can have no worldly views, and is therefore an infallible mark of sincerity : “ When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and “ when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father that sees in secret, and thy Father that sees “ in secret shall reward thee openly.” And tho’ public worship has its peculiar advantages, as it tends to the glorifying of God before men, yet it will do the worshipper no real service, unless it arises from

an inward principle of devotion and piety, which is in the sight of God of greatest price.

Secondly, We proceed to consider the pleasures and advantages of a religious course of life. Let us begin with the pleasures. And,

1. Vital religion will by degrees free us from the fears of the divine wrath, than which nothing can be more tormenting. "The wicked," says the prophet, "is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt: there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." In the midst of laughter and foolish mirth, their hearts are often sorrowful, from the sudden pangs of an accusing conscience, and awful apprehensions of almighty vengeance that hangs over them: but what springs of consolation will arise in the soul, from its converse with a reconciled God, and a rational persuasion that his ways are acceptable to him! 'Tis a great blessing to be kept from those enormous vices which often bring down judgments upon men in this life; but how much greater is the pleasure to know that we are passed from death to life; and by frequent converse with God in the duties of religion, to taste and see that he is gracious! Such an one cannot lie under dread and terror of mind any considerable time: if sorrow should endure for a night, joy will return in the morning; and after a dark and gloomy hour, divine comforts will break in, and delight his soul.

2. Vital religion will by degrees subdue and destroy those unruly passions, which discompose the mind, and make it unfit for the true enjoyment of itself; such as wrath, malice, revenge, &c. which, beside the guilt they contract, have a natural inconsistency with substantial happiness. When men are under the government of irregular appetites, they

they have not the free use of their reason, and must therefore be very much indisposed to acts of devotion : vital religion requires an intense application of mind, and some previous sequestration of the thoughts from other objects, which a man under the power of ungovernable passion is not capable of : but the more we converse with God and the heavenly world, the sooner shall we get the mastery over these enemies of our peace ; the grace of God will by degrees purify the soul from the dregs of corrupt nature ; the combat between flesh and spirit will abate, and in due time we shall obtain a complete victory.

3. By this means the mind will improve in knowledge, and be furnished with truths of the greatest importance and delight. 'Tis pleasant to contemplate the wisdom of God in the works of creation and providence ; but how surprizingly wonderful are the mysteries of redemption, and the harmony of all the divine attributes in the salvation of mankind ! Of these we may say with the apostle Paul, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past our finding out ? " The angels desire a further acquaintance with them, and the apostle Paul assures us, that he accounted all his knowledge, as a Jew and a philosopher, but loss for this : the more we look into the wonders of divine grace, the more we shall admire them ; even eternity itself will never exhaust the delightful contemplation. How excellent then is the furniture of a renewed mind, already enriched with some degrees of this knowledge, and the principles of all those divine graces, which are ripening apace for glory ! the understanding is daily acquiring more knowledge, and the beauties of holiness are growing up to perfection,

tion. Men may arrive at a very considerable degree of wisdom and virtue, by the diligent use of their natural powers ; but the religious Christian is also enlightened from above ; upon which account the Psalmist declared, “ he had more understanding “ than all his teachers, and that he understood “ more than the ancients,” Psal. cxix. 101. David had the reputation of a great and wise prince in politics and philosophy, but his chief excellency consisted in a temper of his mind, that engaged him in frequent converse with heaven, and a diligent study of the laws of God, which, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, furnished him with superior knowledge, and diffused an inexpressible pleasure through all the faculties of his soul.

5. The pleasures of vital religion are of a superior nature and excellency from those derived from sense and reason. They are purely spiritual ; not like the entertainments of eating and drinking, musick and mirth, which instead of improving the mind, very often debase it to a level with the brutes : how many by luxury and excess have grown stupid and indolent, and at length lost the very use of their understandings ! but true religion enlarges the mind, and fills it with the noblest ideas ; it has a natural tendency to purify and exalt it to the highest degree of spiritual perfection. The pleasures of sense are but of a short continuance, and usually attended with some mixtures of uneasiness ; or when the enjoyment is over, leave a troublesome reflection behind. When king Solomon had run through all the pleasures of life, not having withheld from his heart any joy, nor kept from his eyes any thing they desired, he pronounced, upon the whole, “ all was vanity and vexation of spirit,” Eccles. i. 10, 11. The pleasures of reason and philosophy are of a nobler nature, but produce
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so many perplexing uncertainties in the present state, that he who increases knowledge, very often increases sorrow: but the pleasures of religion are sure and certain, solid and lasting, as they are founded upon the real truth and excellency of things. What can equal the contemplation of the love of God in the Redeemer, the beauty and excellency of the divine perfections, and the assurance that the Christian has of the incomprehensible glories of the future state! the fruit of these things are peace, and the effect of them quietness and assurance for ever: the prospect is not only serene and peaceful, but exceeding joyous, and like the shining light, which shines more and more to the perfect day. These pleasures are exalted beyond the reach of all created art or malice; and though we may be deprived of every earthly delight, we never can of them, as our blessed Master told his disciples, "Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh away from you." And what crowns their excellency is, that we shall never be weary of them: the delights of sense may raise great expectations of happiness, and be attended with much pomp and noise, but they don't answer; how quickly are we cloyed and surfeited, and grow not only into an indifferency, but a distaste of them! But the pleasures of religion are constant and satisfying, and the oftener repeated, the greater is the relish. When the Christian has been engaged in delightful contemplations of the beauties of religion for many hours, when his heart has been in heaven, and under the powerful impressions of divine love, he is unwilling to come down from the mount, as no doubt the apostle Paul was, when caught up into the third heaven. It is impossible to describe the various objects of delight the saints above enjoy,
and

and the extent of their bliss, but everlasting joys are on their heads ; fresh springs of delight arise from every new discovery of the wisdom and goodness of God in his works of providence, grace, and glory. And as they are always beholding the face of the Lamb, it is with the highest certainty, we may conclude, in his presence they have fullness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore.

Secondly, We come now to consider the advantages of vital religion, both in this life and the future. If we consider the present life,

1. Vital religion will procure us reputation and a good name ; even profligate sinners, who hate religion, will commend the religious man, that acts upon principles of undisssembled honesty and virtue : If a man's ways please the Lord, his very enemies will be at peace with him ; however, this will certainly recommend him to the esteem of wise and good men, who know the worth of real integrity, and how rarely it is to be met with in the world ; such a man can hardly fail of establishing a character, according to the apostle, Rom. xiv. 18. " He that in these things serves Christ, " (that is, in righteousness and peace, and joy in " the Holy Ghost) is acceptable to God and approved of men."

2. It will secure us the true enjoyment of life ; for a peculiar blessing will attend the labours of good men, and they shall inherit substance : estates gained by deceit and falsehood may be attended with a curse, and consume away like the moth ; but he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely ; and that which he gets by honest industry, will wear well, and be attended with a blessing. If the providence of God should not prosper his endeavours, so far as to raise him to the most plentiful circumstances,
religion

religion will make him amends, by teaching him to be easy and contented with that station wherein God has placed him. The true enjoyment of life does not consist in an abundance of the world, but in a good conscience, and a temper of mind suited to our circumstances, which are the genuine fruits of true religion: nor is happiness to be found in the palaces of kings and nobles, so often as in the cottages of peasants; for better is "a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith," Prov. xv. 16.

3. Long life is frequently the portion of religious men, as appears from sundry declarations of holy scripture; "My son," says Solomon, "forget not my laws, but let thy heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life shall they add unto thee," Prov. iii. 15. And speaking of the wisdom of being religious, he adds, verse 16. "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." The truth of which depends not merely upon the promise of God, but upon the nature of things; for true religion obliges us to the practice of those virtues which in their own nature have a tendency to the preservation of health, as temperance, chastity, and the moderate use of the blessings of life; while those who live in any kind of excess break their constitutions, and bring upon themselves sicknesses and distempers, which frequently terminate in untimely death. Vital religion teaches us also the due government of our own spirits, by calming the mind, and preventing the fury and rage of passions which fire the blood, and sometimes hurry the unhappy creature upon some sudden revenge on himself or others.

4. Vital religion has this further advantage, that it makes us useful to others. A good man is a blessing

sing to his relations and friends, and may be serviceable to the neighbourhood in which he lives, by composing differences, and recommending the excellency of religion by his example and conversation. The presence of a good man in company has frequently struck an awe upon a profligate sinner, and laid him under restraints: many have been convinced of the folly of vice, and encouraged to the practice of virtue, by the conversation of the righteous: the free and easy practice of virtue, without austerity and stiffness, has something very charming and alluring to a reasonable mind. Good men may be further useful to the public by their prayers and intercessions, whereby the judgments of God may be averted, or extraordinary blessings obtained. How prevalent were the prayers of Moses, of Elias, of Daniel, and Jeremiah, for the people of Israel! and we are still assured, that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous prevaieth much. I might add, that vital religion very often derives a blessing upon posterity, according to the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments; his seed shall inherit the earth, wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever," Psal. cxii. 1. So that if we were to confine our views only to the present life, vital religion is certainly attended with very great and considerable advantages. But then,

5. If we look forward to the future life, the prospect opens beyond imagination; for "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has laid up for them that love him." The rewards of virtue and undissembled piety in the future world, infinitely exceed the services and inconveniences which attend them in the present state;

state; vital religion may bring us under the disadvantages of self-denial, persecution, and even the fiery trial; but put them altogether, and “the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.” The advantages of that state of happiness beyond the present, consist chiefly in this, that we shall be perfectly free from all the inconveniences that attend us here below, and shall be possessed of the most consummate happiness and felicity we are capable of enjoying; we shall live in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb; we shall enjoy the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and spend an eternity in the most agreeable employment; all which we are assured of, not only from the promise of God, but from the reason of things: as certainly as there is a God who governs the world, in whose sight vice is odious, and true religion and virtue acceptable, so certain is it, the real Christian shall be fully recompensed at the final judgment in the great day. If therefore men would duly weigh the advantages on both sides; a life of voluptuousness and sensual pleasure, attended with the apprehensions and fears of everlasting misery; and a life of rational devotion and virtue, attended with the certain prospect of an eternity of intellectual and heavenly joys and delights,—I persuade myself every considerate mind would immediately determine on the side of religion.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us then carefully enquire, whether we are acquainted with the life and power of religion; for it is not a name, nor a form, nor an external profession that has these pleasures and advantages. Men may drag on in a course of duty like slaves that perform a task for fear of punishment; they

may be constant in their attendance on public worship ; nay, they may escape the pollutions of the world through lust, and live sober and inoffensive lives, and yet be strangers to the power of godliness : vital religion arises from within, and consists in the soul's converse with God ; here are the springs of peace and joy, and of those spiritual pleasures, that formal professors are unacquainted with. Look therefore to your spirits, whether they are so far sanctified, as to be reconciled to the reasonableness and equity of the divine laws ; look to their employment in religious duties, whether there be a warmth of affection, and holy communion with the things above : Can you say with the apostle in our text, that you have a habitual delight in the laws of God after the inward man ? These are questions of great importance ; for without an experimental acquaintance with the inward and spiritual part of religion, you have neither lot nor portion in this matter.

2. Let this serve to recommend that religion which hath such a tendency to promote men's happiness in this life and the next. Vital religion will certainly be attended with some few inconveniences from the remains of indwelling corruption, and the temptations that surround us from the world, but still the balance of substantial happiness is very much on that side at present ; and if we take into the account the assured expectation of everlasting felicity at the end of this short and transitory life, it will admit of no comparison : for what are the few and uncertain days of mortal life, to the eternal joys of the upper world ; or the empty and unsatisfying delights of sense, to those rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of God for ever !

ever! It is therefore an argument of the strange depravation of our natures, that so few should choose the paths of religion and virtue; and that those who are truly religious should be of a reserved and melancholy countenance, as if there were no entertainments in religion to balance the forbidden pleasures of sin, or that the service of God was not consistent with the lawful enjoyment of the blessings of Providence: the austerity of some persons who have been famous for piety and devotion, the preciseness of their dress and behaviour, and the rigorous and severe prohibition of the lawful recreations of life, has done great disservice to religion, and raised strong prejudices against it. How much better would it be, if devout Christians were of a chearful countenance, and endeavoured to represent religion to the world in its native beauty, by an easy and free conversation, and by an indulgence at proper seasons to such harmless and innocent diversions as may relax the mind, and promote a chearfulness in conversation! The Christian religion forbids none of these things, but only refines them, and guards against their excess: and if men would view it in this light, all its imaginary terrors would vanish, it would appear the most eligible course of life, the beauties of it would strike the mind, and the rewards that attend it both here and hereafter, would make us conclude with king Solomon, Prov. iii. 14. "That the merchandise of it is
"better than the merchandise of silver, and the
"gain thereof than fine gold; that it is more
"precious than rubies, and all the things thou
"canst desire are not to be compared with
"it." We should then experience, that "length
"of days are in her right hand, and in her left
"hand

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“ hand riches and honour; that her ways are
“ ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are
“ peace; that she is a tree of life to all that lay
“ hold upon her, and happy is every one that re-
“ taineth her.”

SERMON

 SERMON LI.

The Death of the Body, and separate State of
Souls.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and
the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

MAN is a creature of wonderful and peculiar composition, consisting of a mortal body, and immortal soul. The account we have of his creation is, that " God formed him of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," Gen. ii. 7. Had he continued in his primitive integrity, the union of this soul and body had never been dissolved; the power of God, which at first formed him, would have maintained him in a state of immortality: but by his apostacy from God, he became a mortal man; then the sentence came forth from the mouth of his Judge, " Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," chap. iii. 19. And the apostle leads us back to the first offence,

fence, as the original of death to all mankind, "By man came death, and in Adam all die," 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. Sin and death came in together, and hence it is that infants die: the body is dead, or of a dying frame, because of sin, Chap. viii. 10. A law of mortality is passed upon human nature, because of transgression; God for this reason has pronounced that men shall die, and has thereupon suffered an alteration to be made in the temperament of the body, as sooner or later will issue in death; and "then the dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit unto God who gave it."

In these words the three following things are suggested to our thoughts: the Lord help us to consider them in a due manner!

I. That death reduces our bodies to their primitive dust: "then shall the dust return to the earth as it was."

II. That the soul does not die with the body: "the spirit returns unto God who gave it," at the same time that "the dust returns to the earth."

III. That immediately after death, the soul appears before God, to be consigned to a separate state of blessedness or misery in another world: and this will account for the reason of the spirit's going to God when the body dies.

Our first observation is,

I. That death reduces our bodies to their primitive dust.

They are fine pieces of divine workmanship, "fearfully and wonderfully made, curiously wrought,

“ wrought, and fashioned with all their members,” Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15, 16. But curious and exact as their frame is, they are but piles of dust, varnished clay, and animated earth, exquisitely put together, and mechanised by the wisdom and power of God, according to the eternal model of his infinite mind: their original is dust, they are contemptible and mean, weak and frail, and dissolvable into dust. No wonder that we are “ mortal men, who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and who are crushed before the moth,” Job iv. 17, 19.

The body is but “ our earthly house of this tabernacle ;” it is rather a tent or tabernacle, erected for a little time, than a fixed dwelling-place ; and as it is but an earthly house, it can’t stand long. ’Tis often thrown down in an instant, without any warning, as by a mighty whirlwind ; or, if it escapes or weathers storms for a while, it will ere long decay of itself by its own infirmity, and tumble into its primitive dust. Either violence from without, or some distemper within, will certainly dissolve the mortal frame, and perhaps in a moment, before we are aware : “ One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet ; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow : and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure : they shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them,” Job xxi. 23, —27. “ All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust : in a moment shall they die, and the mighty shall be taken away without hand,” Job xxxiv. 15, 20. The beautiful frame of the body will then be defaced, its animal life and powers will then expire, all its sensation and action will then fail, it will then

dissolve, and putrify, and be reduced to its first principle, which is dust. "If I wait," says Job, "the grave is my house, I have made my bed in the darkness: I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and sister," Chap. xvii. 13, 14. And after this, the body will put on the form of common dust. And is this indeed the state of the body? methinks 'tis natural to make the following reflections upon it.

1. How doth this stain the pride of all flesh, and bring their glory into contempt!

What are pedigree and noble blood, that mortal man should value himself upon them? Rich and poor, monarchs and beggars, are "all made of one blood," Acts xvii. 26. And as it is blood under the same common attainder by sin, they shall all lie down alike in the dust, and be allied to corruption and worms. What is there in the fine features, the clear skin, the sparkling eyes, the charming blee, and beautiful shape of the body, to be fond or proud of? They are but a compound of dust, and in a little time they will all dissolve in putrefaction, and be as offensive and contemptible as the most homely and deformed; "their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling," Psal. xlix. 14.

What are the patchings and paintings, the modish dress, and rich attire of the body, that we should vainly pride ourselves in them? They are but the deckings and the ornaments of a heap of dust, that seems ashamed to appear without them, and must quickly exchange them for pale faces, and a shroud; then, if not before, God will "take away the bravery of our tinkling ornaments," Isai. iii. 18. And why should any boast of their strength and agility of body, which will
quickly

quickly crumble into dust? God will "weaken
 " the strength of the mighty," Job xii. 21. "He
 " delighteth not in the strength of an horse, he
 " taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man: the
 " Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in
 " those that hope in his mercy," Psal. cxlvii.
 10, 11.

2. Why should we give way to the slavish fear
 of man?

He is but dust, and must die as well as we; and
 God can easily stop his breath, and cut off all his
 designs against us, by bringing him down to the
 dust of death before us: hence he says to his peo-
 ple, "I, even I am he that comforteth you; who
 " art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man
 " that shall die, and of the son of man which shall
 " be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy
 " Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens,
 " and laid the foundations of the earth? and
 " hast feared continually every day, because of the
 " fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to de-
 " stroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?"
 Isa. li. 12, 13. What is it that we are afraid of from
 the hand of man? the utmost he can do, is only
 to kill the body, and throw down a house of clay,
 which would quickly tumble of itself; and yet
 it shall stand as long as God designs it, and has
 any good purposes to serve by it.

Why then should we be afraid of any man li-
 ving, so as to be ensnared into the commission of
 any sin, or the neglect of any duty; or so as to
 be discouraged in our adherence to Christ, and
 profession of his name, by any punishments men
 can inflict upon us? "I say unto you my friends,"
 says our blessed Lord, "be not afraid of them
 " that kill the body, and after that have no more
 " that they can do. But I will forewarn you
 " whom

“whom you shall fear : fear him which, after he has
 “killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say
 “unto you, fear him,” Luke xii. 4, 5.

3. How illustriously does God display his glory in our dust !

What a wonderful living machine has he made it ! What vigour, strength, and beauty has he put into it ! how has he fitted every part for the office he designed it ! and when it shall be dissolved into dust again, he will build it anew with greater improvements and refinements, sprightliness, and glory, than ever before. Its scattered particles shall be collected together, and compacted into an incorruptible, beauteous, and immortal frame, when the Saviour comes again : “For he will change our
 “vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his
 “glorious body, according to the power whereby he
 “is able even to subdue all things to himself,” Phil. iii. 21. And O what a transcendent shine of glory is there in the body of Christ ! into what a refined, majestic, and beautiful form is it cast in his exalted state, beyond the most amiable and illustrious appearances of all visible objects ! How surprising is it that all this should be wrought upon dust, and that the best materials for it are only dust ! How wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working is our God, and how highly to be revered and adored by all that are round about him !

4. How great is the condescension of the Son of God, that he would cloath himself with our dust, and so become a mortal man like ourselves !

The children to be redeemed “being partakers
 “of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part
 “of the same,” Heb. ii. 14. And to shew how low he humbled himself, his incarnation is usually set out by his being made flesh, and taking flesh, and dwelling among us, and by his having a body
 which

which God prepared him. His body was of the same common dust with ours, that he might be allied to us, might be a fit person to redeem us, and might be capable of living, obeying, and dying for us : and though his flesh saw no corruption ; yet it was mortal flesh, and was brought into the dust of death, Psal. xxii. 15.

What amazing condescension was this, that the eternal Son of God, the Prince of life, and Lord of glory, should humble himself so far, as to tabernacle in flesh, and to submit to the law of death, that he might take away its sting and curse from us, and raise our bodies to a glorious immortality ! Here is the believer's safety in death ; and his faith herein is his great support and comfort under all sadning thoughts that he must die. This leads us to the next proposition, which is,

II. That the soul does not die with the body.

It is a spirit, its nature is immaterial or spiritual, as opposed to body ; and at death they both return to their original, the body to its earth, and the soul to God who gave it. The soul of man is distinguished from the spirit of a meer animal by this, that " the spirit of man goes upwards and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth," Eccles. iii. 21. Our souls or spirits are not made of other materials, nor are they derived from our earthly parents, as our bodies are ; but they are the immediate work of God, who is called by way of eminence, the Father of our spirits, in opposition to the fathers of our flesh, Heb. xii. 9. And the God of the spirits of all flesh, Numb. xvi. 22. and xxvii. 19. and the Lord that formeth the spirit of man within him, Zech. xii. 1. He forms the soul of man by repeated creating acts, and forms it within him, to constitute him man : hence
he

he speaks of souls as his peculiar property, in opposition to the property of parents. "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine," Ezek. xviii. 4. I am the only author, and therefore the only lord of both; they are the souls which I have made, Isa. lvii. 16.

And as he constitutes human nature, by forming the spirit of man within him; so at its dissolution, the spirit goes to God who gave it. Death does not kill the soul, by putting it into a lifeless inactive state with the body, it only dissolves their union with each other, and so reduces the body to dust, and transmits the soul to the Father of spirits, in the world of spirits. This is an important point, which may receive some light from reason itself; but appears with still more unquestionable evidence from divine revelation.

1. Reason itself tells us, that the soul is immortal, and does not die with the body.

Our natural notions of things suggest that the soul of man is something very different from the body: for there is no agreement in our ideas between matter and spirit, or between any conceivable properties, forms, or motions of the finest particles of body, and a thinking, free, self-active being, which presides over, and governs the body, according to its own will, can take in spiritual and abstract notions, and universal ideas relating to God, religion and morality, as well as to corporeal things, and can compare them with one another in a variety of relations, and reflect and reason upon them, and draw a long train of speculative, as well as practical consequences from them.

Nor is there any inconsistency in the thought, that this soul should be capable of living without the body: on the other hand, it is highly reasonable
to

to suppose, that this thinking spiritual substance cannot be divided into parts, that it cannot suffer a dissolution by any external impressions from corporeal objects, and that, as it is of a different nature, and does not derive its being from the body, it cannot be destroyed by the destruction of the body. God alone can put an end to its existence; but, as he has made man so much superior to all the rest of this lower creation, so near a-kin in his soul to the angelic nature, and has furnished it with such exalted powers of conversing with infinitely sublimer objects, than any that pertain to the body, or to the present life, who can admit the thought, that such a being is not to survive the body? It is shocking to imagine, that God designed such a soul as this, to wear out a few years amidst a thousand sorrows on earth, and then to die with the body; and that these sorrows should be most multiplied, as they often are, to afflict the souls of the best of men, by means of their relation to the body, and on the account of their religion and goodness, and then to kill them with their bodies.

And though by the laws of union, in our present degenerate state, the soul is often cramped and hindered in its operations, by indispositions of the body; yet many times it is most vigorous in the exercise of all intellectual, holy, and spiritual powers when the body is weakest, and drawing nearest to the very article of death. How much more must its noblest faculties find themselves at liberty, as soon as they are dismissed from union with the dark and fettering fumes of flesh and blood! Add to all this, that the soul is a subject of moral government, that God has made it capable of continual improvements in knowledge and goodness, holiness and happiness, vastly beyond all that it can possibly attain to here; and that he has given it
strong

strong appetites and desires after immortality, attended with fears of misery, and hopes of happiness in a future world, immediately upon its remove from this.

Surely then such a creature, formed with such superior capacities, inclinations, and expectations, is not formed with them in vain : it cannot reasonably be supposed, that the infinitely wise and good God would have furnished it with all these sublime powers and appetites, and suffered them to continue with us, even since our apostacy from him, if there were nothing real to answer them : accordingly the very Heathens themselves had strong apprehensions of the immortality of the soul ; their apotheoses, and worshipping deceased men for gods, supposed their present existence in an invisible state ; and the soul's surviving the body was such a common conjecture, at least, of all ages and nations among them, that Cicero calls it " the voice of nature," and Seneca thought the consent of all mankind about it had the force of a considerable argument to prove it. But we have still a better proof to insist on, and that is,

2. Divine Revelation.

Here we have such descriptions of death, as intimate a separation of the soul from the body ; and here we have an account of souls, which after death returned again to their bodies, and of souls which exist in another world separate from their bodies.

(1.) The scripture gives us such descriptions of death, as intimate a separation of the soul from the body.

Our text calls it the dust's returning to the earth as it was, and the spirit's returning to God who gave it. " He sets his heart upon man, and " gathers unto himself his spirit and his breath,"

Job

Job xxxiv. 14. The soul at death is separated from the body, it does not go down with it to the earth, but departs from it : when Rachel was at the point of death, it is said " her soul was in departing," Gen. xxxv. 18. Accordingly the apostle Paul, speaking of his own death, says, " The time of " my departure is at hand," 2 Tim. iv. 6. And it was such a departure of the soul from the body, " as unclothed it from the body," 2 Cor. v. 4. The apostle Peter likewise gives us a notion of death, much to the same purpose, when he calls it a putting off this tabernacle, meaning the body. " I " think it meet," says he, " as long as I am in " this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you " in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must " put off this my tabernacle," 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. All this supposes the continued existence of the soul after its remove from the body.

At other times, and that most usually, the scripture represents death as a giving up the ghost, or spirit, which goes away with our last breath. And our Lord, describing the death which men may inflict upon us, says, " Fear not them which kill the " body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul " and body in hell," Matt. x. 28. Here death is represented as only reaching to the body ; men may kill this ; but they can do no more, they cannot kill the soul : but if the soul dies with the body, killing one would be killing the other too ; and so the death of the soul would be as much in the power of men, as the death of the body itself. And therefore, when Christ tells us they cannot kill the soul, as they may the body, it must certainly import that the soul survives the body. If any should suppose that, by killing the soul, our Saviour meant destroying its happiness by a moral and eternal death ;

death ; this I apprehend could not be his meaning, because men can no more hinder the resurrection of the body to eternal life, than they can hinder the eternal life and blessedness of the soul ; it is equally out of their power to do either of these ; and yet they are said to be able to do that to the body which they cannot do to the soul ; they can kill the one, but not the other. This evidently intimates, that it is a natural and not a moral death which our Lord speaks of, and that the death which men inflict, is the natural destruction of the body, but is not the natural destruction of the soul ; or that it does not put an end to the soul's vital existence, consciousness, thought, and action, which in a natural sense would be killing the soul.

Whenever, therefore, the scripture in other places speaks of death as a sleep, or of there being “ no wisdom, knowledge, or remembrance of God in the grave ; or of man's dying like the beasts, and having no pre-eminence over them,” and the like : all such expressions are to be understood, either with relation to the body, and not the soul ; or else with relation to the affairs of this world, and our present ways of living and acting in it, and not with relation to the other world which the soul is gone to. Hence,

(2.) We have accounts in scripture of souls, which after death have returned again to their bodies.

The apostle speaking of himself, says, “ That he could not tell whether his soul was in the body or out of it,” in the time of the extraordinary revelations that were made to him ; 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4. but this supposes him to have apprehended that his soul might have gone out of the body, and returned to it again : and we have as many instances of other souls which have done so, as we have of persons

persons raised from the dead. Their being dead, as you have heard, supposes a departure or separation of their souls from their bodies, according to the scripture-notion of death; and their being brought to life must consequently suppose a return of the same souls to those bodies again, otherwise they would not have been the same persons as they were before. Among instances of this sort, we have the widow of Zarepath's son, of whom it is expressly said, "the soul of the child came into him again," 1 Kings xvii. 21, 22. We have likewise the Shunamite's son in the Old Testament; and the widow's son, Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, and our Lord himself, with several others, in the New. To these we might add the narrative we have of "the many bodies of saints, which slept, and arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many," Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. All these were dead, their spirits were departed, and yet they returned again to their bodies to animate them; and therefore they must have had a separate existence during the time of their absence from their bodies, as our Lord, speaking of his own soul, lets us know it was in paradise, Luke xxiii. 43.

Hence,

(3.) We have an account of souls, which do exist in another world separate from their bodies.

Of this class we may reckon all "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 23. And the apostle John had a visionary representation of the "souls of them under the altar, who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth," Rev. vi. 9, 10. But

the existence of separate souls in another world will still further appear from the next general proposition, which is,

III. That immediately after death the soul appears before God, to be consigned to a separate state of blessedness or misery in another world: and this accounts for the reason of its returning to him who gave it.

It is readily allowed, that the general judgment is reserved for the last day, when an exact enquiry will be made into all men's thoughts, words, and actions, for the public manifestation of the glory of God in his rewards and punishments, for the visible honour of the Redeemer, and for the complete blessedness or misery of the whole man, soul and body together: then all mankind will be gathered together in two distinct companies, and then will be the final retribution to the whole world of saints and sinners, as you will hear in the following discourses. But, in the mean while, there is what may be called a particular, private, and personal judgment, some way notified to every soul immediately after its separation from the body. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this to judgment."

By this particular judgment departed souls are immediately gathered to their people, *i. e.* to the people, whose company they kept and chose, and to whom they properly belonged upon earth. Moses and Aaron were "gathered unto their people!" Numb. xxvii. 13. And David prayed, that "God would not gather his soul with sinners, nor his life with bloody men," Psal. xxvi. 9. He declared that he "had not sat with vain persons, neither would he go in with dissemblers, he hated the congregation of evil-doers, and would not sit with the wicked," verse 4, 5. he had no pleasure

sure in their company or practices here, and therefore begged that his soul at death might not be gathered with theirs, that he might not have their lot, nor have them for his companions in the world he was going to; but that God would take him to the company which he chose, and which were most agreeable to him. But, to consider this matter a little more particularly, with respect to saints and sinners.

1. The souls of believers, immediately after death, enter into a state of blessedness with Christ in glory.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from "henceforth," Rev. xiv. 13. or from this time, *inquit* they are blessed from the time of their death. God "will then redeem their souls from the power of the grave, for he will receive them," according to the Psalmist's faith concerning himself, Psal. xlix. 15. "He guides us with his counsel here, and afterwards receives us to glory," Psalm lxxiii. 24. Glory begins where his guidance ends; and the righteous no sooner perish from the earth, but "they enter into peace, each one walking in his uprightness," Isa. lvii. 1, 2. That very day their souls "are with Christ in paradise," as he promised the penitent thief upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. No sooner is their "earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved, but they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and no sooner are their souls absent from the body, but they are "present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 1, 8. If their souls do not go to Christ as soon as they are absent from the body, it might rather be said, that while they live in communion with him by faith here, they are present with him, and when they die they are absent from him: but the apostle knew better, and therefore called his being present in the body, a being absent from the Lord, and his being
absent

absent from the body, a being present with the Lord. And at another time he expresses the same sentiment, saying, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain; yet what I shall choose, I wot not; for I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 21, 22, 23. But where would have been the gain of his death, if his soul were to die, or sleep with the body, till the resurrection of the just? or how could the thought of going to Christ put him into a strait about his choice of life or death, if by dying then he could not have got one moment sooner to Christ than he would in case he had lived a thousand years longer upon earth? But the apostle thought of nothing short of an immediate going to Christ upon his dissolution, whatever others may think of it. And Stephen evidently had the same sense of things, when, with his dying breath, "he called upon God, saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59. He committed his departing soul into Christ's hands, as to one who was just ready to receive it. It is not, Lord Jesus raise me again, or receive my spirit at the resurrection of the dead; for then he might as well have said, Lord Jesus receive my body: but he plainly speaks of something to be done to his spirit immediately upon his death: and what was that? Why, that Christ would receive it to himself, that where he is, there it might be also. Hence we read of the spirits of just men made perfect, which are already with "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," Heb. xii. 23, 24. and of multitudes of saints surrounding the throne of God and the Lamb on high, together with the holy angels, and uniting in their songs of praise, while time is running on, and the dispensations of Providence towards our world are working their way

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to the consummation of all things, Rev. v. and vii. chapters. But,

2. The souls of the wicked, immediately after death, enter into a state of misery.

If the blessedness of the righteous commences immediately upon their dying out of this world, why should not the misery of the wicked do so too? It was said of Judas, that he "went to his own place," Acts i. 25. to the place of misery, which belonged to him, as the just reward of his iniquity; "his soul was gathered with sinners." And the apostle Peter, taking occasion to mention the disobedient, who lived in the days of Noah, and to whom Christ went and preached by his Spirit in Noah's ministry, speaks of their souls, as spirits that were already in prison at the time of writing his epistle, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

But, to conclude this subject, our Lord himself has given us a clear representation of the different states of the righteous and the wicked, immediately after death, in his account of the rich epicure, and poor Lazarus, the beggar, (Luke xvi. 19—31.) where he tells us, "Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Poor and despised as he was upon earth, a convoy of angels were the guard of his departing spirit, that it might go with safety and with grandeur to glory. The "rich man also died and was buried, and immediately we find him in hell, lifting up his eyes in torments, and seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom," (verse 22, 23.) How naturally do the characters of the rich man, here described, call our thoughts back to the rich man, pointed out in this gospel before, to whom God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. ? Or, as it might be rendered,

dered, they shall require thy soul of thee, (τῇ ψυχῇ σου ἀγγέλων ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ) the evil angels, as messengers of divine justice shall require it of thee: and so, as the good angels carried the soul of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, the evil angels carried the soul of this rich man to the torments of hell. The representation of the different states of these two persons in the other world, is evidently managed in the figurative way; and therefore we need not wonder that a separate spirit should be here described, as having eyes and a tongue in distress, and as being tormented in flames. These are strong pathetic images, to set out the extreme miseries of a lost soul, by the most distressing pain and anguish that we have any notion of; but, as I conceive, they are not in this place to be taken in a literal sense, any more than Lazarus's being in Abraham's bosom, or more than the conversation which passed between Abraham and the rich man, or than those passages of scripture, which speak of the tongues, the wings, the feet, and faces of angels. And that the misery and blessedness of these two persons were felt immediately after their respective deaths, appears from the rich man being in *hades* (ἐν τῷ ᾍδῃ) which properly signifies the state of separate spirits, and from his having five brethren then living upon earth, to whom he desired Lazarus might be sent from the dead, to warn them of their danger, which he thought would be more effectual for their conviction, than the means of grace they then enjoyed. A practical reflection or two shall close the present discourse. Therefore,

1. This shews what a wonderful change death will make upon every one of us, for the better or the worse.

The doctrine we have been hearing, leaves no
room

room for a purgatory, for a soul-sleeping, or for any middle state between heaven and hell; the soul immediately goes to one or other of these two: and O what a surprize of joy or grief will it be conscious of within itself, as soon as it shall be dismissed from the body, and all its powers shall awake with full vigour in another world, where it never was before, and where its way of thinking, acting, and conversing, will be vastly different from all it ever before had any conceptions of. O the horror and agony that will seize the sinner; and O the joy and transport that will spring and flush in the saints at their first appearing before God, to be either admitted into the presence of his glory, or to be banished from it for ever.

“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death,” Prov. xiv. 32. Fain would the wicked live here always; his heart is so strongly affected to the body, and its concerns in the present life, and so conscious of guilt, that he can’t endure the thought of a separation, and of going to appear before the great God: but go he must, whether he will or no; death will hurl him away in the midst of his iniquities, and of his reluctance too; his soul will be driven away from his body, to make its appearance before the throne of God; it will be driven away from time to eternity, from its present comforts and enjoyments, to eternal distress and misery; from all its flattering hopes, to the deepest despair, from all means of grace to unmixed executions of wrath, from its beloved companions on earth, yea, and from the delightful presence of God, and Christ, and blessed spirits in heaven, to the company and torments of devils and damned souls in hell. But “the righteous hath hope in his death;” there are solid grounds of

hope for him, and all his hopes shall be accomplished, and exceeded: all his darkness, doubts, and fears, will then be banished; all his temptations and sins, wants and sorrows, will then have a perpetual end; and all his present comforts will then be exchanged for incomparably better and uninterrupted joys, amidst assuring prospects to the resurrection of the body, to share with the soul in all possible perfection and blessedness for ever.

2. This shews that nothing can be of higher importance to us, than a due preparation for death.

We all know that we must die, God only knows how soon; it may be before another day. The many instances of sudden death, that are daily striking our eyes or ears, may justly alarm our expectations of it too; for we are all dust of the same mortal mould, and all breathe the same precarious breath; and we are sure it cannot be long before the place, which knows us now, will know us no more. But if death should seize us before we are fitted and prepared for it, how tremendous will our condition be! What an immediate, irreversible, insupportable and eternal ruin will it bring upon us! To die in our sins, to die strangers to Christ and vital religion, in a state of nature and enmity with God, is to die into a state of inexpressible horror and torment, there to abide for ever.

But to die in a state of peace and reconciliation with God, through faith in the blood of Jesus, and at the close of a life of holy obedience; to die in union with Christ, and under the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, entitled to heaven, and fitted for it, is lovely dying indeed. This is only to die out of a world of sin, darkness, and sorrow, into
a world

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a world of immortal light and life with Christ in all his blessedness and glory. And what are all the trifling affairs of this present uncertain dying life, to be compared with the eternal and important events of a certain and approaching death? These should lie uppermost in our thoughts, pursuits, and aims, that they may turn to our advantage, whatsoever else befalls us; and it should be our chief concern that we may be found among the blessed, who shall die in the Lord. If we are secure of this, all possible blessedness is ours for ever, and nothing can make us miserable; but if we miss of this, our eternal destruction is inevitable, and nothing can make us happy; for “what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matt. xvi. 26.

SERMON LII.

The Resurrection of the Body, and the last Judgment.

HÉBREWS VI. 2.

—of Resurrection of the Dead, and of eternal Judgment.

DEATH is the end of all men, as to this present world; but there is not an utter end put to their being when they die, for after death comes the judgment; and they shall be raised again in order to their being finally adjudged. The apostle reckons the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, among the principles of the doctrines of Christ, as appears from the verse preceding my text; so that we cannot be true Christians without the knowledge and belief of them: therefore it concerns us to be very attentive while these are the subjects of discourse. I shall begin,

I. With

I. With the resurrection of the dead.

This is a doctrine of mere revelation ; it is not discoverable by the light of nature : but, right reason can discern nothing absurd and contradictory in it, as laid down in the scripture ; though the Athenians, those great pretenders to philosophy, mocked when the apostle Paul spoke to them of “ the resurrection of the dead,” Acts xvii. 32. Surely he that formed the body of man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into it the breath of life, can raise and animate it again, when it has been reduced to dust : there appears no impossibility in this to him that considers the power of God : of this the apostle was very confident, therefore he thus appeals to his judges, “ Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ?” Acts xxvi. 8. Supposing we had never heard or seen any thing of the manner of producing vegetables, should we not have thought it very unlikely, that the seed put into the earth, after it had putrified there, would spring up and yield a large increase of fruit ? Yet this wonderful work of God falling now so often under our observation, we expect it as a thing coming of course, and take little notice of his hand in it ; why then should any doubt of his ability to raise these our bodies in incorruption, though they are sown in corruption ? The scripture makes use of this similitude to illustrate the resurrection of the dead ; therefore I thought fit to mention it upon this occasion. But, though natural reason informs us that God can, yet it does not assure us that he will raise the dead. This we learn from his word, wherein he has declared, in the most express terms, that all the dead shall be raised, and he has also given some account of the manner in which this shall be accomplished.

1. I shall

1. I shall set before you some texts of scripture, which assert a general resurrection of the dead.

This important truth was not unknown to them who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation. The apostle says, the "Jews allowed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust," Acts xxiv. 15. And well might they allow this; for it is plainly asserted in these sacred writings, which they professed to be the rule of their faith, Dan. xii. 2. "Many of them," that is the multitude of them, "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality into a clear light by the gospel, hath assured us, that the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation," John v. 28, 29. All the repositories of the dead shall yield them up, and they shall stand both small and great before God; according to that prophetick vision, Rev. xx. 12, 13. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell, or the grave, delivered up the dead that were in them."

2. I shall propose to you the particular accounts contained in the scriptures of the resurrection of the dead.

Indeed we do not find so much said in the word of God of the resurrection of the wicked. We are herein told, as you have heard, that they shall be raised; but with what bodies they shall be raised again, it doth not particularly inform us. Our bodies in their present state cannot long endure

dure sharp pain; this will kill them. But we may be sure that the bodies of those who have done evil shall be so constituted at the resurrection, as to be capable of sustaining everlasting torments in hell, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," as we read, Mark ix. 48.

The scripture insists much more upon the resurrection of the just; and particularly describes the manner of it. This is the subject of the xvth chap. of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, as is very evident; and it is again treated of in the 1 Thess. chap. iv. the latter part. The bodies of the saints shall come forth at the resurrection with qualities vastly different, not only from those which they bore when laid down in their graves, but from those that belonged to them at any time in this life. To shew the possibility of such a great change in them, the apostle observes in the 1 Cor. xv. what a variety and difference is to be seen in the bodies, which God has made, and that do now fall under our cognizance, the 39, 40 and 41 verses, "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts; there are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial, but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another in glory." In the 42 verse it is said, "So also is the resurrection of the dead:" that is, the constitution and properties of the body, when raised again, shall differ widely from its state in this world. Of this difference the apostle gives four instances in the following words, which I shall briefly consider,

1. "It

1. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." The apostle having mentioned in the preceding verses, the springing up of seed that is sown, as bearing some resemblance to the resurrection of the dead, has a respect hereto in this expression. The body is sown in corruption. It comes into this world a polluted, perishing thing, full of corrupt seeds which produce loathsome diseases; and when death seizes it, this makes a great change in it for the worse; how soon does it turn to corruption! but it shall be raised in incorruption, pure and amiable. It shall be so formed, as to have no disagreeable, jarring principles in it, that tend to disorder and dissolution. It shall always remain healthy, and never die. Our Saviour gives this account of the children of the resurrection, that they "neither marry nor are given in marriage," there will be no need of this to preserve their species: "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto, or as the angels," Luke xx. 35, 36.

2. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." It is styled our *vile* body, or the body of our humiliation, Phil. iii. 21. The soul is greatly abased by being confined to so mean a dwelling as the body is in its present condition: and when this quits it, there is nothing comely and ornamental remaining; it soon becomes a prey to worms. But it shall be raised in glory. This expression plainly shews, that the apostle is speaking here of the resurrection of the righteous: for, of the wicked it is said, that they shall "awake to shame and everlasting contempt." The bodies of those who are the members of Christ, shall be cloathed, when raised again, with inexpressible splendor; nothing that is base and shameful shall belong to them. We are told, that they shall be
 "fashioned

“fashioned like unto the glorious body of
“Christ,” Phil. iii. 21. And we may form some
notion of the lustre of his glorified body, by the
account which is given of his transfiguration on
the mountain by those who were the “eye wit-
“nesses of his majesty,” Mat. xvii. 2. “His
“face did shine as the sun, and his raiment
“was white as the light.” And of the righteous,
who shall be transformed into his likeness, it
is expressly said, Matt. xiii. 43. “That they shall
“shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their
“Father.”

3. “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in
power.” How helpless is the human body, when
first born? and it remains very weak for a con-
siderable while; unable to supply its wants, and
to defend itself from evils. How soon does it de-
cay, and sink under the infirmities of age? in its
best estate it is exceeding frail. When the spirit
is willing, it is often hindered from doing the
good it designs by the weakness of the flesh. But
it is raised in power; it shall not grow up to its
full strength by slow degrees, as it does in this
world: it shall be perfectly vigorous and strong in
the morning of resurrection, it shall have no need of
recruits from food and sleep, it shall “hunger no
“more, neither thirst any more,” Rev. vii. 16.
It shall be liable to no casualties or diseases; it
shall feel no weariness, nor shall it be impaired by
length of days. “There shall be no more death,
“neither sorrow nor cryings, neither shall there
“be any more pain,” Rev. xxi. 4. The body at
the resurrection shall be strengthened to bear the
exalted joys, and to attend incessantly to the work
of heaven. They that shall be admitted into that
happy state, are said to be “before the throne of

“ God, and to serve him day and night in his temple,” Rev. vii. 15.

4. It is sown a natural or animal body. The word in the original is translated *living* in the 45th verse. This has inclined some interpreters to think, that when the apostle speaks of the body's being sown, he has a respect to its production into the world: for the character of *living* or *animal*, does not belong unto it, when put into the grave. Man as to his body, at present is a-kin to the brutes; its appetites are of the same kind with theirs; it is supported as they are by meats that perish. How much of our time is taken up in providing for the wants of this body?

But it is raised a spiritual body; it shall not incumber and clog the soul, but obey with the utmost agility and speed all its volitions: there shall be no law in its members to war against the law of the mind; nor shall there be any thing pertaining to it, that will give the least diversion to the spirit from its glorious employments: a vast refinement shall pass upon the body at the resurrection, whereby it will be fitted for the kingdom of God in the upper world, of which it is said, that it cannot be inherited by flesh and blood, 1 Cor. xv. 50.

But though it should be allowed that this account of the raised body shews it will be no incumbrance to the soul, may it not be asked, Would it not be as well for the spirit of the just to remain in their state of separation from the body, what valuable end then can be served by its resurrection?

To this it may be answered, That it seems very proper, every one should in the body receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil. Again, it is notorious, that the soul, while in the body, has such an affection for it, as to be hardly brought by all the in-

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conveniences of this life, to a willingness to quit it. And who can tell what tendencies there may be in human minds by the law of their creation to their bodies, when separated from them. It is certain, that the scripture represents the great rising day as the season when men shall be recompensed, Luke xiv. 14. And we may reasonably suppose, that it will be a great satisfaction to the spirits of the just, to meet their beloved bodies at the resurrection perfectly well tempered, and adapted to their state of blessedness and glory.

I must observe, that the word of God ascribes this vast change in the bodies of the saints, of which I have been discoursing, to our Lord Jesus Christ: and it is mentioned as a work of omnipotence: He is said to effect this, "according to the working" whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. iii. 21. Indeed all the dead shall be awakened and brought out of their graves by his voice, John v. 28, 29. Christ shall raise the wicked; as their Creator, Ruler, and Judge; but the righteous shall be animated by him as their head. To such he is made a quickening spirit, as it is expressed, 1 Cor. xv. 45. His resurrection was the pledge and pattern of theirs: Therefore it is said in the 49th verse, "That as they have born" the image of the earthly Adam, they shall also "bear the image of the heavenly. I must make a few reflections upon this general head.

1. The people of God may derive hence support and comfort under the burthens and inconveniences of the present state of their bodies. Some are favoured with a healthy constitution of body, for which it becomes them to be very thankful to their Creator and Preserver; yet even this has its snares and temptations, which will be very hurtful to us, if we do not guard against them with

constant watchfulness. Others are exercised with a great deal of pain and illness, so that they have but little enjoyment of life; but the hope of their having inconceivably better bodies at the resurrection, should not only make them patient, but joyful, notwithstanding all that they now endure from the disorders of their flesh; “for the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in the children of God,” Rom. viii. 18, 21.

2. What has been said, should moderate our grief, when our pious friends or relatives are removed from us by death. The apostle puts Christians in mind of the doctrine of the resurrection, as having a great tendency to calm their minds upon such mournful occasions, 1 Thess. iii. 13, 14. “I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope: for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

3. What we have heard should encourage and animate us to bear the difficulties and discharge the duties to which we are called. We read of some that were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, Heb. xi. 35. The apostle declares, that his hope of this excited him to the practice of universal holiness with diligence, Acts xxiv. 15, 16. “I have hope towards God, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust: and herein, or for this reason, do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Let us attend to the improvement which he makes of his excellent discourse upon

upon the subject of the resurrection, with which it is concluded, 1 Cor. xv. ver. ult. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

I proceed, in the

Second place, to speak of eternal judgment; the character of Eternal is given it, because hereby our states shall be determined and fixed for ever.

The apostle Paul reasoned before Felix of judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 25. He proved this truth by arguments drawn from the nature and reason of things. No other proofs would have affected a heathen, as Felix was, who did not own a revelation. There are sundry considerations which shew the reasonableness of a future judgment.

God has made us intelligent creatures, capable of moral government: he has given us a law, to the observance of which we are directed by the light of nature; the many benefits he confers upon us strongly oblige us to conform to his will. And is it not reasonable to expect, that our infinitely wise creator, kind benefactor, and righteous sovereign, will require of us an account of our behaviour, how we have used his favours, and how we have regarded his authority? God does in the course of his providence towards the apostate race of mankind, frequently signify his displeasure against sin; the judgments which he executeth in this world upon daring offenders are plain proofs of his righteous government, that he "judgeth in the earth," Psal. lviii. 11. But inasmuch as judgment has not been yet fully executed upon the workers of iniquity, many of them continuing all their days in prosperous circumstances, and going
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off the stage of life without any distinguishing marks of the divine indignation, while several of God's faithful servants groan under heavy burdens: may it not be justly concluded, that there is a day coming wherein there will be a full "revelation of the righteous judgment" of the governor of the universe, by his making a very wide and visible difference betwixt all the just and unjust, by "rendering to every man according to his deeds," Rom. ii. 5, 6.

Again, the consciences of men give testimony to the truth of a future judgment. The convictions of these when they have done wickedly, are plain forebodings of the account which they must give to their great Judge. The apostle speaking of the "day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ," says of the Gentiles, who were destitute of a revelation, "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another," Rom. ii. 14, 15.

But we, who are favoured with the word of God, have the eternal judgment set before us in a fair and strong light. The account which this gives us of that grand transaction shall now be considered. And it may be proper to take notice of what the scripture speaks,

1. Of the Judge. We are told, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 22. Inasmuch as men are to be judged after the resurrection, in an embodied state, there seems to be a great deal of propriety in their having a visible judge: and such a one the Son will be; he is the Son of Man: this is assigned as the reason of his having "authority given him to execute judgment," ver. 27. It is also very fit, that he, who condescended to stand at the bar of poor creatures, and submitted

to

to be tried and condemned by them, for the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, should have the honour of judging the world. He is every way qualified to manage this great work: He "loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity," Heb. i. 9. There is not "any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. 13. It is not possible he should be imposed upon by false appearances; his judgment shall not be formed upon fallible evidence; "he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes; neither reprove after the hearing of his ears," Isa. xi. 3. He shall have a most certain and perfect knowledge of every case.

When Christ does come to judgment, it will be with the greatest pomp; he will then appear like himself. It is said, that he "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory," Matt. xxv. 31. We read, that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," 1 Thess. iv. 16. What awful solemnity is signified by these words we cannot now fully explain.

2dly, Of the persons that shall be judged. It is expressly declared, that the world shall be judged by Jesus Christ, Acts xvii. 31. that "all nations shall be gathered before him," Matt. xxv. 32. John saw, in prophetick vision, "the dead, small and great, stand before God," Rev. xx. 12. None shall escape the judgment of the great day; high and low, rich and poor, young and old, shall be brought to it. The great ones of the earth, who did pride themselves in their power here, shall not be able to decline appearing in that

that day before the Lord, and the meanest shall not be over-looked. *How angels*

3dly, Of the rule of judgment. The apostle acquaints us, that "as many as have sinned without law;" that is, without a written law, which God gave unto the Jews, "shall perish without law;" they shall be condemned for their violations of the law of nature, which is a perfect rule of rectitude, to which all mankind are obliged to conform themselves: "and as many as have sinned in the law," or have transgressed a law revealed to them, "shall be judged by the law," Rom. ii. 12. of which this honourable account is given, that it is "holy, just, and good," chap. vii. 12. Those whose lot has been cast under the gospel, which is a most wise and gracious constitution, shall be judged by that gospel, James ii. 12. "So speak ye, and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," is an exhortation given to persons professing Christianity. God will "judge the world in righteousness;" he will treat his creatures according to what they have enjoyed, and not according to what they had not.

4thly, Of the judicial process at the great day, the scripture gives us this representation.

1. An account must be given of what we have received, and how we have acted. Our Lord will demand of us an account of our stewardship, Luke xvi. 2. A strict enquiry will be made into the talents, wherewith we have been entrusted; into our capacities and opportunities for doing and receiving good; and into the improvement we have made of them. When Daniel in vision beheld the judgment set, he saw the books opened, chap. vii. 10.; and John further informs us, that the dead were represented to him, as "judged out

"out of those things which were written in
 "the books, according to their works," Rev.
 xx. 12. The most hidden works of darkness
 shall then be brought into the fullest light. "The
 "secrets of men shall be judged by Jesus Christ,"
 Rom. ii. 16. We must give an account of our
 words as well as of our deeds, Matt. xii. 36. The
 hypocrite shall be stripped of all disguises, and ap-
 pear in his true colours. There will be the most
 undoubted evidence of the facts, upon which the
 judgment of God will be grounded; therefore will
 he be "justified in his sayings, and overcome when
 "he is judged," Rom. iii. 4. not merely by an
 over-bearing power, but by a thorough conviction
 of the equity of his proceedings. *Reserve*

2. Sentence will be passed answerable to the fe-
 veral states wherein mankind shall be found: the
 whole human race is become guilty in the sight of
 God; and sad would be the case of every one of
 us, should we "have judgment without mercy,"
 Jam. ii. 13. But a sentence of absolution shall be
 pronounced upon all penitent converted persons,
 as is signified by those words, Acts iii. 19. "Re-
 "pent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be
 "blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall
 "come from the presence of the Lord." Those
 who are now declared by the gospel to be justified,
 as all they are who believe with the heart, and
 evidence the sincerity of their faith by their works,
 shall then, by the faithful Judge, be proclaimed ac-
 cepted; he will say to such, "Good and faithful
 "servants, well done, enter ye into the joy of your
 "Lord; come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit
 "the kingdom prepared for you from the founda-
 "tion of the world: for I was an hungered, and
 "ye gave me meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me
 "drink," Matt. xxv. 23—34. 35. On the other

hand, the impenitent and unbelieving, who have persisted in a course of sin, and in the neglect of duty, shall be condemned by him; to them it shall be said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," verse 41.

3. The sentence then passed shall be certainly and immediately executed. The wicked shall "go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46. "Every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. not only according to the nature or kind of what he hath done, but according to the measure or circumstances of it. "He that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with more stripes," than he that had not so clear a knowledge of it, Luke xii. 47, 48. "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment," than for those who lie under the aggravated guilt of slighting gospel-privileges, Mark vi. 11. Indeed we are far from deserving any good at the hand of God by all that we do for him; our righteousnesses are very imperfect, our transgressions are innumerable; so that our reward must be of grace; there is nothing in ourselves that can give a just claim unto the least of the divine favours. It is only in the Lord, upon his account, for his sake, that "our labour shall not be in vain." Yet it seems very becoming an equitable Judge, to proportion his gracious recompences to the services of his creatures. The scripture informs us, that "he who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully," 2 Cor. ix. 6. The heaven and hell,

to

to which the just and unjust shall be respectively adjudged, are the subjects of the following discourses.

The doctrine of eternal judgment is capable of being improved to very useful purposes. As,

1. Sinners should be hereby awakened, and deterred from following their evil courses. Felix trembled when he heard the apostle Paul reasoning "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Acts xxiv. 25. His conscience charged him with guilt, and he was struck with horror at the thoughts of appearing before a righteous Judge. It does not appear that these his convictions produced any good effect, but certainly they rendered his continuance in sin afterwards the more inexcusable. God is represented as conniving at the sinful practices of the Heathen nations, while they lived in darkness; but the discovery which he made unto them by the gospel, of his appointment of a judgment-day, did set the duty of repentance before them in the strongest and most convincing light; so that they are left without excuse, who remain impenitent, Acts xvii. 30, 31. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." Surely mankind would not dare to provoke God by their sensual indulgences, if they duly considered, that "for all these things God will bring them into judgment," Eccles. xi. 9. When the Lord shall come to execute judgment, those stupid ungodly wretches, who now make light of him, shall feel a dreadful conviction of their folly, Jude, verse 14, 15. The boldest and most hardened sinners shall

then lose all their courage : they shall cry, but they shall cry in vain, “ to the mountains and “ rocks to fall on them, and hide them from “ the face of him that sitteth on the throne,” “ and from the wrath of the Lamb,” Rev. vi. 16, 17. O that God by his Spirit would convince sinners of judgment, so as to prevent their running on in ways of wickedness !

2. The doctrine of eternal judgment should quicken and excite the children of men to the diligent discharge of their duties. This is the improvement which was made of it by the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. “ Wherefore “ we labour that we may be accepted of the “ Lord ; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive “ the things done in his body, according to that “ he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Seeing our state-for eternity is to be determined by “ the sentence of the Lord, it is our earnest care, “ and constant endeavour to approve ourselves “ unto him.” Such is the influence which this important article of their belief should have upon all Christians : did they lay this more to heart, it can hardly be supposed that they would do the work of the Lord so negligently as it is too often done by them.

3. The consideration of an eternal judgment should induce persons faithfully to improve all their talents. They who waste their talents, who spend them in the service of sin and Satan, are not the only persons who shall give an account with grief ; those also who hide them, who make no good use of them, who are unprofitable servants, shall be doomed to “ outer “ darkness, where there shall be weeping and “ gnashing

"gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxv. 30. Such as now thirst with so much vehemence after the things of this world, and are discontented because they possess no more of them, will wish at the day of judgment they had not so much to give an account of; for "unto whomsoever much is given, of them much shall be required," Luke xii. 48.

4. The doctrine of eternal judgment should put us upon a careful examination of ourselves. Is the day coming wherein we shall be tried with the greatest exactness, and an irreversible sentence shall be passed upon us, surely it becomes us to search our hearts and ways with all possible impartiality. Our condition will be very woeful, if we flatter and deceive ourselves. Let us beware of resting satisfied with the outward forms of religion; in vain shall we plead before the Lord, that we have eaten and drunk in his presence, and that he hath taught in our streets: he will say unto us, if we are "workers of iniquity, I know you not, I do not approve of you, depart from me," Luke xiii. 25, 26. We should, with the utmost care, as if we were before the tribunal of Christ, compare ourselves with the word of God, which will be the rule of judgment; and enquire with great concern of soul, whether our faith be unfeigned, whether our repentance be unto salvation, whether our temper and conversation are becoming the gospel: we ought to give ourselves no rest, till we arrive at a well-grounded satisfaction, that we are of their number to whom a crown of righteousness shall be given by the righteous Judge when he shall appear. If we would not be judged, that is condemned, let us now judge, examine, or
prove

prove ourselves, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Blessed is that servant, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find making a right use of the doctrine of eternal judgment.

SERMON

SERMON LIII.

Hell, or the final Misery of the Wicked.

ROMANS I. 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

HOPE and fear are well known to be strong and commanding passions in the minds of men, and to have a mighty influence on their lives and actions. These, when they are under the power of corrupt nature, and managed by an evil heart, are sources of much wickedness; but when they are under the conduct of divine grace, they become engaging motives to religion and holiness. Now the gospel of Christ addresses to both these passions, in a very powerful manner, in order to engage them on the side of holiness, and in the interest of our own happiness; for "therein the righteousness of God is revealed," even a righteousness wrought by the Son of God, to justify guilty

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ty men; that we may be encouraged, by the hope of mercy, to return to our duty, and allured to love and to obey God. But, alas! we are naturally ungrateful and evil, not apt to be impressed by love, and won by kindness; therefore God sees it needful to address to our fear too, and to affright us from our sins by the terrors of his wrath and vengeance: therefore also in the same gospel *, “The
 “ wrath of God is revealed from heaven against
 “ all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who
 “ hold the truth in unrighteousness †.”

This awful part of the gospel revelation is to be the subject of this discourse: in which I shall consider,

First, The subject matter of this revelation, even
 “ the wrath of God.”

Secondly, Against whom, and against what the wrath of God is revealed, viz. “ against all un-
 “ godliness

* The word *gospel* strictly signifies good tidings, and so it most properly denotes the declaration of the grace of God to sinners in Christ, which is the chief subject of the New Testament; and from thence the whole New Testament, in which are also contained many precepts, and threatenings, and declarations of God’s wrath against sinners, is called the *gospel*, as in 2 Theff. i. 8. “ them that obey not the gospel.” In this sense I use the word *gospel*, for the most part, in this Sermon.

† By the revelation of God’s wrath in this text, some persons understand merely his inflicting temporal punishments upon sinners in this world; some instances of which are mentioned afterwards in this chapter, in verses 24, 26, 28. But it seems to me an easier sense to understand it of the clearer revelation which is now made by the gospel, or New Testament, of God’s displeasure against sin, and of the punishment which he will inflict upon all wicked men, viz. Gentiles, as well as upon wicked Jews, in the other world: in this sense I follow the general current of expositors, as Grotius, Calvin, Locke, Whitby, and many others.

“ godliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold
“ the truth in unrighteousness.”

Thirdly, How this wrath of God is revealed in the gospel.

First, We are to consider the subject-matter of this revelation which our text speaks of, viz. “ The
“ wrath of God.” Wrath imports the highest degree of displeasure and resentment. But we must remember, that when this, and indeed when any passion is attributed to God, it is only by way of allusion to what we observe in men; for, in reality, God is not subject to like passions as we are. Our conceptions of God are very imperfect; we want proper language when we speak of the incomprehensible Deity, and are forced to borrow metaphors from creatures, especially from man, to describe him by. Thus we call such a manner of the divine acting, as would be the effect of love among men, “ the love of God;” and such a manner of acting, as would be the natural fruit of anger and resentment among men, we call “ the wrath of God.” When therefore we read of God’s wrath, we are not to understand by it any such violent emotion of the mind as we feel when we are provoked to wrath, but only as when a man is very angry with another for some fault or offence, he will punish him severely for it, if he has power so to do; so God’s punishing of sinners with exquisite torments in hell, is called his wrath. Thus we read of the wrath of God that shall come upon the children of disobedience, Eph. v. 6. and the day of judgment, when God will inflict upon the wicked the full and deserved punishment of their sins, is called the day of his wrath, Rom. xi, 5.

Now this wrath of God, or the future punishment of the damned, may be distinguished into two kinds, viz. The punishment of loss, and the punish-

ment of sense. The one signifies their loss of happiness ; the other imports some further positive punishment which God will inflict upon them.

1. The wrath of God includes the loss of his favour, and of all the blessings that follow upon it. These shall go away, says Christ, when the final sentence has once been pronounced on wicked and ungodly men, these shall go away from the presence of God and Christ, and from the company of the blessed, and from all the joys and glories of heaven. And was this all, this alone would be a very grievous punishment ; for it implies their total loss of all that is good and happy. Now will the Holy Spirit utterly forsake them, and never suggest one good thought, nor excite so much as one faint desire after holiness in their minds any more : so that their being banished from God and heaven, will in a manner change them into devils, and finish the ruin of their depraved nature : besides this, to be shut out of heaven, to be banished from those bright habitations of holiness and comfort, from the society of the blessed, and from all share and partnership in their joys and glories ; how will it afflict them ! how will it vex them ! what a torment will it be to those despairing wretches, to behold the once-despised saints in their glorious forms ! to see them so happy in that heaven, from whence they themselves are for ever shut out ! and that the damned in hell shall have some sight or knowledge of the glory of the blessed, is intimated by our Saviour in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus : the rich man in hell lift up his eyes, and beheld Lazarus in Abraham's bosom ; and no doubt but he was sadly vexed to see him there. It will be a further aggravation of the misery of the damned in hell, to remember their own former blessings and comforts, which are now lost and gone for ever.

Remem-

Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, said Abraham to that rich sinner. How bitter must such a reflection be! it would surely be happier for them, at least they would not be quite so miserable, if they could now forget how they had formerly lived, and what they had formerly enjoyed; but, alas! they must remember it, they cannot help it; and a very tormenting remembrance, no doubt, it will be, to think how merrily they once lived, how many bounties of Providence they once enjoyed and abused; nay, that once there was a time when multitudes of them were favoured with the gospel means of grace and salvation, which they had, but, alas, they despised the very same means by which the saints are got to glory. Such will their punishment of loss be. We proceed;

2. To consider the punishment of sense, or that positive punishment which God will inflict upon sinners in another world, which is also included in his wrath. These shall not only go away from the presence of God, and from the heavenly society, but they shall go into everlasting punishment; which no doubt imports, that they shall suffer some positive pain and torment. The scripture constantly borrows metaphors from the most painful and terrible things in nature, to express the condition of the damned by. Hell is represented as a place of darkness, of utter darkness, where the devils are bound in chains of darkness. The damned in hell are said to weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; there their worm never dies; meaning, most probably, that remorse of conscience which torments them continually. But the most common metaphor in scripture to signify the torments of hell is fire: it is a furnace of fire, of fire that is unquenchable. There miserable wretches suffer

the vengeance of eternal fire. Devouring fire and everlasting burning. These are dreadful images, horrible representations of the state of the damned. They certainly import something that is exceedingly grievous and tormenting, something, very probably, that is much worse than all we can conceive of while we are in this world. We can only guess at some few articles of their pain and misery: as for instance,

The sad remorse and despair of their own consciences, which will be as grievous to the mind, as it would be painful to the body for a living worm to be continually gnawing the most tender and sensible parts. It is well known, that nothing is so intolerably painful in the present life, as an accusing and despairing conscience. A wounded spirit who can bear! Several instances there have been of persons, who by means of this have been a terror to themselves, and to all about them. You have read of Cain and Judas, who were neither of them able to endure the terrors of their own mind. Cain cried out in the anguish of his spirit, after he had murdered his brother, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," Gen. iv. 13. And Judas conceiving that hell itself could not be worse than the remorse of conscience, which he felt at present, for his having betrayed his Lord, murdered himself, and plunged at once into a dreadful eternity. Now, if the remorse of conscience for one sin be so intolerable, what will it be when God shall set all a man's sins in order before him, and impress his conscience with a distinct remembrance of every one of them? In this life, sinners often make a shift to drown the clamours of conscience, either in the hurries of business, or in sensual pleasures: but, alas! in hell, there will be nothing to divert their thoughts from sad reflections; they will have nothing

thing to think of but their own misery; in hell they will be made to know and to feel that God is very angry with them. 'A sense of God's wrath impressed on the consciences of the damned, is what some persons understand to be chiefly meant by the fire of hell: and who in this world can conceive how terrible that will be? "Who knoweth the power of his anger? According to his fear so is his wrath," Psal. lxxx. 11. How dreadful will it be to bear his fiery indignation!

Further than all this, it is no improbable conjecture, which some have made, that the sinner's own unmortified lusts will be his tormentors in hell; for suppose a person whose mind is full fraught with vile affections and impure desires, (which may probably enough be the case of the damned in hell,) but yet cut off from all opportunity of gratifying any one of them. How wretchedly uneasy and miserable must such a person be! Suppose the sinner's heart to be full of enmity and rage against God; but it is an impotent rage, he can do nothing to hurt the Almighty: his malice must needs turn to his own vexation. So that the lusts and evil affections of wicked persons may be their own tormentors, and the instruments of God's vengeance upon them for ever. Thus I have set before you a little sketch of that future punishment of sin and sinners, which is expressed in our text by the wrath of God. We are now to consider,

Secondly, Against whom, and against what this wrath of God is, and shall be revealed, viz. against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, that is, against all sin and sinners, who live and die impenitent and unreformed, and without an interest in the pardoning mercy of God through Christ. It is revealed, and it shall be manifested against all ungodliness,

linefs, meaning fuch fins as are committed more immediately againft God, as the tranfgreffions of the firft table of his law; and againft all unrighteoufnefs of men, or fins againft the fecond table, which prefcribes our duty towards our neighbour and ourfelves. God will manifef his wrath againft all fin of every fort and kind: and more efpecially againft thofe finners who hold the truth in unrighteoufnefs, that is, fuch perfons who fin againft light and knowledge, which they either actually had, or might have attained unto. Thus God will juftly condemn and punifh the wicked heathens for their fins againft the light and law of nature; becaufe, as it follows in the next words after our text, That which may be known of God is manifef in them, or to them, for God hath fhewed it unto them. And he will ftill more feverely punifh wicked Chriftians, who fwear againft the clearer gospel-revelation of truth and duty; to whom God has fo plainly revealed both his righteoufnefs and his wrath, but they are neither awed by his threatnings, nor moved by his mercies. “To
“ whom much is given, of them much is required;” therefore their abufive mercies and means of grace will greatly aggravate their condemnation another day: and the gospel, which was ordained unto life, will prove to fuch perfons to be unto death. Upon this account Chrift told the wicked unbelieving inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethfaida, that it fhould be “more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for them,” Luke x. 14. becaufe, though perhaps thofe wicked Heathens had been guilty of as great, or greater immoralities, yet they never had fuch means of knowing and doing better as thefe enjoyed: and, befides, to all their other fins, they have added this one, which is the blackeft guilt of all, even their refu-
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sing and despising an offered Saviour. Thus will the wrath of God be revealed and manifested in the most dreadful manner, against such sinners "who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" and who persist in sin against the warnings and counsels, against the calls and invitations of the gospel. Upon the whole, from this account which our text gives us of the objects of God's wrath, we may learn, that moral honesty alone will not exempt us from the wrath of God; or that it is not enough that we do no harm to men, for God has revealed his wrath against all ungodliness: nor will any outward profession of religion, or zeal for doctrines, or modes of worship, make up for the want of moral honesty, in the account of the great day; for God has also revealed his wrath against all unrighteousness of men. Let us learn then not to make light of any sin whatever, for God has revealed his wrath against all sorts of transgressions of his holy law; and without a pardon through the blood of Christ, the least sin would sink us into hell for ever. I proceed now,

Thirdly, To shew you how this wrath of God is revealed in the gospel. It is but a reasonable fear of guilty creatures that God will punish sin; but in what manner he will take vengeance on the wicked transgressors of his law, how should we know without a revelation? We should have only some uncertain fears of something, we know not what, which would have but little efficacy to reform the lives of men, and to deter them from wickedness. We are therefore greatly beholden to the gospel, not only for the revelation it makes of God's pardoning mercy, and of a glorious salvation, but also for a more clear and perfect discovery of the future state and torments of the wicked. We have need
of

of all arguments to awaken our minds, and to engage us heartily in religion, and in the interest of our own salvation. I am now to shew you what it is, in particular, that the gospel reveals to us concerning this wrath of God, which shall be manifested against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men in a future world. As,

I. The gospel reveals and discovers to us the certainty of this wrath and vengeance of God. The light of nature makes it highly probable that God will punish sin hereafter; the gospel makes it certain, and puts the matter out of all doubt. For,

1. Therein the wrath of God is expressly declared against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. There we have the testimony of God's own Son, that faithful and true witness, that God is a holy and just God; and that he will manifest his holiness and his justice, by inflicting severe punishments on the wicked and impenitent in a future state. The gospel tells us expressly, that there shall be a day of judgment and recompence, when "God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil," Rom. ii. 6, &c. The gospel tells us, that "the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire, wherethere shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xiii. 42. And that "all who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 1 Theff. i. 8, 9. These are some,

some of the express testimonies of Christ and of his apostles, who wrote by his Spirit, concerning the wrath of God, which shall be manifested against the wicked hereafter. These things the Son of God, who came out of the bosom of the Father, and who perfectly knew his counsels and all his designs, has told us and assured us of. O sinners! should you live and die in sin, and perish in your impenitency and unbelief, you will not be able to plead ignorance in your excuse another day: you must own that you have had fair warning; for God has sent his own Son to tell you how he hates sin, and how severely he is resolved to punish it. Again,

2. The sufferings and death of Christ as revealed in the gospel do abundantly evidence the wrath of God against sin and sinners. For "Christ died for our sins, he suffered for us;" and never was the wrath of God so plainly and so fully revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as by his punishing this their surety and Saviour in their room and stead. You have read of some very awful tokens of God's wrath against sinners, which have appeared in the course of providence; as how he once drowned the whole world, because of the wickedness of men; and how he rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah for sin; but the suffering and death of Christ for sin was a much more awful instance, as well as a more certain proof of the wrath of God, than all the rest put together: for, consider,

Who and what sort of person Christ was. He was God manifested in the flesh, God over all, blessed for evermore. And even with respect to his inferior human nature, he was a most pure and lovely creature, without any stain of sin in his nature, or blemish in his life and practice.

“ He always did those things that pleased the Father,” and never did any thing to deserve the least part of the punishment which he suffered.

Consider again how the Father loved him. So dear was this Son of God to his Father, that Christ could desire no greater favour for his dear disciples, whose welfare and happiness he had so much at heart, than that the Father would but love them as he loved him, John xvii. 23. “ Let them be made perfect in one, “ that the world may know that thou hast sent “ me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” And verse 26. “ that the love wherewith thou hast “ loved me, may be in them, and I in them.” And yet,

Consider what grievous punishment was inflicted upon Christ, and what sufferings he endured. He was wounded and bruised in his body, he was most terribly distressed in his soul : he was put to a most painful and accursed death, and all this “ he “ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He “ was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” What an awful display was here of God’s wrath against sin ! in that he inflicted such grievous punishments on his own dear and innocent Son, only because he had taken upon him to be our surety, and had undertaken to answer for our offences. Can we behold a dying Saviour, as he is set forth in the gospel ? can we hear him cry out, and say, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful ?” Can we see the heavens all darkened over him, and the earth trembling under his cross, in that dismal hour of his suffering ? can we hear him utter these strange words, “ My God, my “ God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” and not learn from all this, that the great God is exceedingly provoked by sin ; and that his wrath will be dread-

fully manifested against all impenitent Christless sinners in the other world? Thus the gospel reveals and discovers "the certainty of God's wrath."

II. The gospel reveals to us certain circumstances of this wrath of God, as particularly, that it will be very terrible to sinners, and that it will be eternal.

That it will be very terrible to sinners. Of this also, the sufferings of Christ, as they are related in the gospel, afford a mighty demonstration. Think what the Son of God suffered for the sins of men; what pains, what torments he endured, when he was treading the wine-press of his Father's wrath; and then think, O sinner! what thou hast to expect from the wrath of the Almighty, if thou shouldest miss of the gospel salvation. What complicated miseries befel our dear Saviour! every thing conspired to make his sufferings grievous! his body was put to exquisite torture; for the death of the cross was one of the most tormenting kinds of death which the cruelty of man had ever invented; his soul was at the same time exceeding sorrowful, and full of anguish. Now all this was but what sin had deserved: something like this therefore shall Christless sinners receive from the wrath of God; their bodies shall be tormented with exquisite pains; and their souls at the same time racked with remorse and dreadful despair. Christ was forsaken of all his friends, and left destitute of every comfort at the time of his last sufferings. His was a cup of wrath without mixture; and so will the damned sinners be. In hell not a drop of water can be had to cool their tongue; there no beam of hope and comfort ever shines. The wrath of the Lamb is now provoked against them, Rev. vi. 16. which speaks their condition to be sad indeed;

for then they have no friend left, even the Lamb of God, the only Saviour of sinners, is become their enemy. Thus, from the circumstances of Christ's sufferings, we may gather, that the wrath of God, which damned sinners shall suffer in their own persons, will be exceedingly terrible. And if further we attend to the descriptions which the gospel gives us of the torments of the damned, we must needs believe they will be extremely dreadful. What a shocking account of them do we read, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus! Luke xvi. 23, 24. "In
 " hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and
 " seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bo-
 " som; and he cried and said, Father Abraham
 " have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he
 " may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool
 " my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." but, alas, his petition was in vain. And elsewhere their punishment is expressed by fire prepared for the devil and his angels; it will be as painful as fire is to the body; it is fire prepared on purpose, by the powerful justice of God, to punish his enemies: nay, it is fire prepared for the devil and his angels, to punish those first and grand rebels against God: no doubt but it is exceeding hot. These are very awful representations of the misery of the damned.

There is one circumstance more in the misery of their case, which the gospel reveals, that is more dreadful than all the rest, viz.

2. That it will be eternal. " These, (that is the
 " wicked) shall go away into everlasting punish-
 " ment," Matt. xxv. 46. " There, in hell, their
 " worm dieth not, and the fire shall never be quenched.
 " The smoke of their torment ascendeth up
 " for ever and ever." Some persons, I know, have taken pains to strain these scriptures, which evidently

dently speak of the eternity of hell torments, into another and milder sense: they would have them either signify a long duration of the punishment of the wicked, or the total annihilation of their being. It is alledged in favour of the former notion, that *for ever* does sometimes in scripture signify only a long time; as when God promised that the sons of Aaron should minister to him in the priest's office for ever, 1 Chron. xxiii. 13. and so the passover is called *an ordinance for ever*: in both cases *for ever* can signify no more than a long time; for the passover has been an antiquated rite now for several ages; and the sons of Aaron are priests no longer. But then let it be observed, that in the case of the passover, and the priesthood, the meaning of *for ever* is easy to be determined from the nature of the things which are spoke of: common sense will tell any man that it could not mean absolute eternity; for neither one nor the other could possibly last longer than the world lasted, nor indeed longer than the Jewish dispensation lasted. But there is nothing in the nature of hell torments that should thus limit the meaning of the words *for ever* and *eternal*. And besides, let it be further noted, that the eternity of hell torments is expressed in scripture just as strongly, and in the very same terms, as the eternity of the heavenly happiness is, which all allow will be absolutely for ever. "The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous into life eternal;" where the original word is exactly the same in both cases. The punishment of the wicked, and the happy life of the good are both *αιωνιος*, without age or limit, without end and expiration. We read of eternal salvation, and of eternal destruction. If the one means absolutely eternal, so must the other too.

As for that other conceit of some persons, that the punishment of the wicked shall be eternal, only as Sodom and Gomorrah are said to "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire," Jude, verse 7. that is, say some, they are for ever burnt up, and shall never be rebuilt any more; and so it is supposed that the wicked shall be utterly destroyed, and there shall be an end of their very being: this notion is not only without any good foundation in scripture, but it is directly contrary to scripture. Everlasting punishment supposes an everlasting sense of misery; for the punishment can last no longer than it is felt. "The worm that never dies, the fire that shall never be quenched," certainly mean pain and anguish, which shall be felt for ever. We must conclude then from scripture, that the torments of the damned in hell will be absolutely eternal. And reason agrees with scripture that it must be so: for, if according to that received rule of justice among men, crimes receive aggravation from the dignity of the person against whom they are committed; so that, to curse the king is a greater crime than to curse a mean man, and deserves severer punishment; it must necessarily follow, that sin against an infinite God is an infinite offence, and merits infinite punishment: but as it is not possible for a finite creature to suffer infinite punishment in any other sense than by the eternal duration of it; this is the only way in which sinners can be punished according to their just desert, even by an eternal suffering. If they shall receive from the hand of God the due wages of their sins, there never will be any time when it can truly be said they have received enough. But still, though every sin against God may, in this respect, very properly be called an infinite offence; yet it follows not that therefore all crimes are equal, because none can be more than infinite;
but

but on other accounts one sin may be greater than another: and though every sin against God deserves eternal punishment, yet some sins may merit a greater measure of that punishment than others do; and God may, as we are told he will, display his justice in the day of judgment, "by rendering to every man according to his deeds." Some sinners shall be cast into a hotter hell than others: and yet the punishment of every damned sinner will be of the same duration, and that is eternal. Now this is the most dreadful circumstance of all others in the misery of the damned. "If, (says an ancient writer,) a sinner in hell did but know that he should suffer those torments no more than a thousand years; or no more thousands of years than there are sands upon the sea-shores, or spires of grass upon the face of the whole earth; it would rejoice him to think, that however there would be an end." But no end! never! never! It is impossible to conceive the despair and anguish that must seize the guilty wretch upon hearing that one word *everlasting*. "Depart ye cursed into *everlasting* fire."

Thus I have finished the doctrinal part of this awful and sad subject, what remains is to make a brief application of it. As,

1. From hence we should learn to be very thankful for Christ, who was sent and came, who suffered and died on purpose to "deliver us from the wrath to come." Blessed be God, it is yet not unavoidable wrath as to any of us: we are told and warned of it, on purpose that we may escape it. God has sent his own Son to deliver us from it; and Christ the Son of God has actually bore this wrath in the room and stead of all that believe on him. O! what praise is due from us to the Father's

ther's love, and to the Son's grace! From the greatness of our danger let us complete the greatness of our deliverance: and from what we have been learning of the dreadfulnes of this wrath of God, let us learn to love Christ our Saviour more, and to be more zealous for promoting his honour and interest. Never sure can we love him enough, nor do enough for him, who has suffered, and even died on a cross, to deliver us from this dreadful wrath of God.

2. Let me exhort sinners to fly from this wrath of God. Think it a wonderful mercy that you are thus fairly warned of it, and that there is a Saviour to fly to; a city of refuge as it were provided, the gates of which are set wide open in the gospel. The same gospel which reveals this wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men, reveals also the righteousness of Christ, which is abundantly sufficient to justify the most guilty sinners; and it promises a rich supply of the spirit of grace, which is sufficient to sanctify the most polluted nature. O fly from this wrath of God, by a hearty closure with Christ. And now know, that if any of you perish, you have had warning; your ruin and damnation will therefore lie wholly at your own door. And certainly it will inflame the wrath of God against you the more, that you were warned to fly from it, but did not. May the good Spirit of God set home these awful truths on your consciences, and bless them to the salvation of your souls! Amen.

SERMON LIV.

Heaven, or the final Happiness of the Righteous.

2 TIMOTHY II. 10.

—That they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

THOUGH many and great are the benefits which God bestows on men in this world ; yet it is manifest that its present state will not admit of their being completely happy in it. All our good here is perpetually mixed with evil : outward blessings in the largest measures are plainly unsuited to the noblest part of our nature : and the exercises of religion, with the pleasures belonging to them, from which the proper good of our souls is to arise, point in their own nature and tendency to another state, wherein they may receive that perfection which they confess a present want of. We may then truly affirm, that the best of this world is the hope of

somewhat better in another. And such hope the gospel lays a sure foundation for. It has brought life and immortality to light, with such fulness of evidence, and clearness of representation, as is abundantly sufficient to raise the faith and desire, the expectation and pursuit of it.

As our minds, during our union to flesh, are scarce capable of conceiving of spiritual and heavenly things, abstracted from all relation to matter, and are most powerfully impressed with what is conveyed to them by the senses and imagination; therefore the sacred scriptures give us various delightful images of future felicity, drawn from sensible and present objects. But then, that we may have all the good use of earthly similitudes to assist and enlarge our ideas of heavenly blessedness free from abuse, and without the danger of debasing it, or misleading us into unworthy conceptions about it; not only the brightest and purest images, most refined from a low and gross sensuality, are made choice of, but for the most part somewhat is added to qualify and elevate them into a spiritual significance.

Thus is this state familiarly set forth under the notion of a kingdom, and the ensigns of royalty and victory, a crown, a throne, palms, and white robes! All the blessed are kings in common, which implies that a perfect self-government is chiefly meant. Their crown is "a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 8. "Their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and are the righteousness of the saints," Rev. vii. 14. chap. xix. 8. They "reign with Christ, and are made kings unto God and their Father," Rev. i. 6. having their wills alway fulfilled, because they are in perfect harmony with the Divine. Is it an inheritance, because of the affluence of all things desirable, the free

free and firm title of the heirs, and their individual and everlasting interest in them? It is an "inheritance" "undefiled, and of saints in light." Is it delineated as a city, denoting not only the transcendent lustre and glory of the seat of the blessed; but the good order wherein the inhabitants are knit together in the possession of common laws and privileges, and maintaining the most agreeable intercourses with one another? It is the holy city, wherein only sacred concerns are carried on; "the city of the living God, having the glory of God in it, and the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof," Rev. xxi. 2, 10, 11, 23, Heb. xiv. 22. Is it described under the emblems of a feast, of paradise, and of the tree of life? An overflowing fulness of its proper entertainments and delights is immediately signified; and that these are not carnal but spiritual, consisting in the transports of intimate communion with God, such as was the crown of the paradisiacal state, is clear from the hints of their feasting with Christ, and "drinking of the river of God's pleasure." And the tree of life represents their perpetual confirmation in this blissful state.

Thus God, in condescension to the poverty and weakness of our minds, has consecrated several material images, to convey some faint and glimmering ideas of heavenly bliss to us: yet he has sufficiently guarded in the manner of the representation against any low, sordid, and earthly construction of them. And this he has farther done, by assuring us in his word, that it is too big and great for human language to express, and the heart of man at present to frame any exact conception of. The things of which it consists are such "which it is not lawful or possible for a man to utter," 2 Cor. xii. 4. which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

“ entered into the heart of man,” 1 Cor. ii. 9. “ It doth not yet appear,” says the apostle John of this state, “ what we shall be,” 1 John iii. 2. And St Paul is bold to affirm, that in it our present knowledge of divine things being very partial, and no better than childish, shall vanish away, in exchange for a new kind, a perfect manly knowledge of them, as seen in their own light, 1 Cor. xiii. 8—12. Hence, when it is described under the most proper or least figurative characters; it is still an “ hidden life,” Col. iii. 3. “ the salvation and the glory which shall be revealed in us,” 1 Pet. i. 5. Rom. viii. 18. And, O! what grand and exalted apprehensions and hopes may this raise in our minds, to be told by the sacred oracles, which contain the surest and fullest discoveries of future happiness we are now capable of, and set it in so many charming lights, that in itself it vastly exceeds whatever can be said or thought of it, is somewhat infinitely greater and better than any thing we know or can conceive, and can only be fully understood when it comes to be enjoyed.

But may we not then give over all farther enquiries into the heavenly state, as superior to all our ideas? I answer, This account should indeed check all nice and minute speculations, all fond and fanciful conjectures about the particular manner of the saints living and enjoying themselves above, which are not warranted by the word of God. But then, it very well consists with an humble and sober examination of the lights divine revelation itself gives of this happy state; which is undoubtedly our duty, and highly necessary and useful to us. Therefore the apostle John subjoins a very agreeable summary of it as well known, to the acknowledgment of its particular nature and manner being unknown; “ We know, that when we shall appear, we shall
“ be

“ be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”

John iii. 2. It is better sure to know but in part, than to know nothing at all of this happiness. Nay, it is absolutely necessary that its general nature be understood and seriously considered by us, that we may not impose on ourselves wrong notions of it, and that we may labour after such a frame and disposition here, as can only qualify us for, and will help us to the best conceptions of it ; since eternal life is begun in its first principles in this world, and the other does but perfect them. Enough, then, of heaven is revealed, as may enable us to form all just and worthy conceptions of it that can be of any real and saving use to us : and enough is concealed to discountenance an impertinent and bold curiosity, to whet our desires the more after it, and to give our enjoyment the additional pleasure of surprise when we enter on it.

Let us now attend to what notices we can gain from the scriptures of truth, of the heavenly state, as coming under the notion of salvation and glory, the two characters expressive of it in the text. Each of these sometimes is put alone for the whole of it ; but being here joined together, they make the description of it more complete ; the former directly signifies the negative part, a deliverance from all evil, and the latter the positive, the possession of the highest and greatest good our nature is capable of. And how significantly and emphatically is this salvation with eternal glory said to be in Christ Jesus ? It is in him, as a possession purchased, in whose right we can only obtain it, it is in him as an inheritance kept in trust, and to be conveyed by him to the appointed heirs. It is in him as the grand exemplar in his human nature of the complete and final happiness of the saints. It is in him both as a beatifick object, and as a perpetual medium thro’
which

which the blessed will see and enjoy God: considerations which greatly enhance, sweeten, and endear future felicity to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Let it be farther observed, that all the articles of the heavenly blessedness, in relation to the souls of the saints in their state of separation, will be much the same for substance before, as after the general resurrection and final judgment. This latter period may indeed be reasonably thought to introduce higher degrees of nearness to God, and larger accessions of glory and pleasure, even to the soul itself on its reunion to the body, and on the completion and collection of all God's elect. Yet we cannot at present understand the difference well enough, to draw out distinct accounts of each period. Therefore the Christian may comfortably assure himself, that this salvation, this glory shall be his, immediately on his dying out of this world, and then entering into heaven, in all the essential ingredients, in all except what relates to the resurrection of the body, which is here waved, having been already considered. And,

First, then, He shall obtain instantly on his arrival at heaven, and everlastingly possess a complete salvation, a perfect freedom from all manner of evil. Whatever darkness now encompasses the positive happiness of heaven; yet we all have experience enough of trouble in this mortal state, (which, though short, is full of evil) to entertain a lively and pleasing idea of the blessing of a total exemption from every afflictive and grieving evil. So strong a sense and impression have some had of the vanity and calamities of this mundane life, that they have thought a deliverance from them at the expence of an utter extinction of being no bad purchase. But how much more comfortable are the views of Christians? They are not to cease to be, that

that they may cease to be miserable, but to cease to be miserable in order to enjoy a perfect felicity. And this their felicity will receive a sweeter relish from a fresh sense and remembrance of the difficulties, dangers, and afflictions they passed through here below, which must needs be very lively and affecting on their first reception into heaven, and finding their stormy and tempestuous passage succeeded with so peaceful and blissful a state, and which no doubt will abide with them for ever. Heaven is a safe and comfortable retreat for the saints, from all the evils and miseries of this life; nor shall new ones spring up in their room, to disturb their tranquillity in that quiet habitation; it is a final and everlasting resting place for them, after they have been almost wearied and worn out with a constant succession of woes and adversities in this wilderness. There, "shall God wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more sorrow nor crying; the days of their mourning shall be ended; sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Rev. vii. 17. chap. xxi. 4. Isa. lx. 20. chap. xxxv. 10. All uneasy rustling passions shall for ever cease, as all occasions to them will be no more. And to mention some particulars,

I. In heaven, there will be a perfect and eternal salvation from all sin. Indeed in this life, a true Christian is in a state of complete pardon and justification. The guilt of his sins never remains on him; there is no sentence of condemnation standing out against him. For he has an abiding interest in the blood of Christ, which cleanses him from all sin. Yet still shall his sins be more solemnly "blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," Acts iii. 19. His absolution and acceptance with God shall be made manifest to the whole world at the last day;

day; and he shall have so full a sense of it in his own conscience from his first appearance before the throne of God, as to banish for ever all fear, shame, and uneasiness from his breast, which so often harboured there in this world, on account of his manifold guilt. At the same time also, that he receives the final and perfectly satisfactory pardon of all the sins of his past life; he shall be put into a capacity of never sinning again, never doing any thing more to offend God, and to need forgiveness. The reigning power of sin was broken, and its interest gradually weakened by renewing grace in this world. Yet it dwelt, it wrought in the Christian, still producing fresh acts to the very end of his days on earth. But now the very being of it is destroyed. The habit and principle is quite eradicated; and with it all acts of sin are come to a perpetual end. With the body of flesh dropping into dust, the body of sin drops together, but shall have no resurrection with, or before or after it. The saint once released from earth, and admitted into heaven, shall have no more vain thoughts, unsteadiness and distraction of mind in the worship of God, a perverse and stubborn will, a hard and deceitful heart, irregular and disorderly affections, unruly lusts of the flesh or of the mind, the languor and weakness of his graces, the inequalities of his frame or unevenness of his steps, and sinister corrupt ends, to complain of to all eternity! These intestine enemies who have lived with him, and been as a thorn and pricking briar in his sides all his life long, and who will pursue him to the very gates of death, when once these gates open a way for him into the regions of immortality, they shall every one of them be left behind, just as the Egyptians were seen no more by Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, wherein they were all drowned. Nor shall

shall any scar or blemish the believer has received in his combats with sin remain on him; "no spot, "or wrinkle, or any such thing:" but it shall be all purged off, and cleared away at death, and heaven will preserve him pure and unblemished for ever. Eph. v. 27. Rev. xiv. 5. O glorious victory, blessed immunity! Such it is in itself, as sin is the worst and vilest, as well as the cause of all other evils; and such it is accounted by all who share in it. To an ungodly sinner it is indeed otherwise; a liberty to, not from sin, is his choice and desire. A sinless heaven therefore has no charms in his eye; nor shall it ever be his portion, as it never could be any happiness to him, and he is no way suited to it. But the saint is one who groans under sin now as his greatest burthen; he hates and strives against it with his whole soul; he rejoices greatly in any partial victory gained over it; and mourns as much when it overcomes and defiles him; he breathes out many a sigh and longing desire for deliverance from it, and is disposed to relish it when it comes in the most delightful manner. How then will he congratulate with himself, and bless his God in the highest strains, when he obtains a total and final freedom from all iniquity!

II. The salvation of heaven will be an absolute and perpetual deliverance from the temptations of Satan. It is a sore exercise, and a constant source of perplexity and vexation to the people of God in this world, that, after they have broke loose from the dominion of the powers of darkness, they are still liable to their assaults. They often feel and lament the pernicious effects of their too successful endeavours to obstruct and corrupt the good they would do, and to ensnare them in sin. And even when they are enabled to withstand them, and will not comply with their wicked suggestions;

yet it gives them no small disquietude to be teased and pressed so close with them, and to have sin brought so near them; that they can scarce tell whether they have yielded or no. At other times, their spiritual peace and comfort are disturbed, their minds cast into hurries and affrightments, their consciences burthened, and unreasonable doubts and fears about their salvation started, by the subtle management of these implacable and assiduous enemies. But, now, all this conflict and trouble will be ended with the soul's admission into heaven. Thither shall the devil be never permitted to enter to attack the holiness or the peace of its blessed inhabitants, who are brought into the room of him and his associates. Though he may pursue an holy soul close to his last moments on earth, almost to the very borders of the celestial paradise (just as he did the Captain of our salvation) yet he can proceed no further. Heaven's gates, which once opened to let him out, are now fast barred to keep him for ever out; nor shall he be able by force or policy to get in, as he once did into the earthly paradise, no, nor to shoot any of his fiery darts into that happy world. The Christian once landed on the heavenly shore, is safe, and eternally out of his reach. He has nothing henceforward to fear from him, or to do with him. But O! with what pleasure will he reflect on the dangers and fears this his great adversary brought him into here, all which he has now clean escaped! How gratefully will he acknowledge the full accomplishment of that promise which has often supported him in the day of battle, that God shall bruise Satan under his feet shortly! Rom. xvi. 20. And how chearfully will he join with fellow-saints in that triumphant song, "Now is come salvation," and

“ and the kingdom of our God and his Christ !” For our accuser and tempter is cast down, and will never lift up his head to hurt and afflict us any more, Rev. xii. 10.

In heaven too all wicked men, as well as evil angels, shall cease from troubling or tempting ; for there shall be none of them there, no more than any matter of temptation in that blessed world.

III. This salvation will be a deliverance from all natural weaknesses : from slowness of apprehension, errors of judgment, slipperiness of memory, levity of will, a rashness or tardiness in resolving, and an heaviness in acting. That irksome lassitude will then cease, which soon overtakes us now in the labours both of the body and of the mind ; on this account they are pronounced “ blessed, who die in the Lord, that they may “ rest from their labours, though their works “ follow them still,” Rev. xiv. 13. Works far more and better than any they performed on earth, “ for they serve God day and night in “ his temple above,” Rev. vii. 15, but all done with ease and pleasure, without the least toil or fatigue. The sensitive appetites, and the need of those mean recruits and gratifications our nature then requires now, will also be no more. The various ill-proportioned temperaments of the body, with the bad influences they respectively have on the mind, will then likewise be perfectly cured. From all these imperfections of our nature and present constitution, which are very much owing to the union of our souls with such gross unwieldy bodies as we now have, will the saints be freed at death ; nor will they be subject to them again, when they receive their bodies at the resurrection, as being then new-modelled, and

become fit instruments to facilitate, enlarge, and perfect, instead of hindering all the noble operations of the soul.

IV. It will be a deliverance from all the diseases and pains which attend our mortal frame, together with the great variety of disagreeable accidents our life on earth is continually liable to. These are no less incident to a good man than to others. He has rather a larger share of them allotted to him ordinarily by Providence for the trial of his graces, and furthering the good of his soul; and his very religion itself will generally increase the load, and draw fresh troubles on him from the hatred of the world. Nor does he less feel the smart of these evils than others. He pretends not to a stoical apathy; a mere solacism in nature. He acknowledges indeed somewhat worse, and chooses affliction rather than iniquity and God's wrath. Nor is he without better supports under them than wicked men have, supports derived from God's gracious presence and promises, which mightily alleviate them, and enable him to bear them with more patience and resignation than others commonly do. Yet still bodily pains, sicknesses, outward wants, ill-treatment from friends or foes, and the rest of the train of human distresses, are to him what they are to other people, and affect him in like manner. Therefore among the cordials which bear him up from sinking under any of these troubles, this is the chief, that death and heaven will end them all. It is with a sensible pleasure and refreshing hopes that he hears this account of the world above; that "there will be no more pain, and" "the inhabitant of it shall not say I am sick," neither shall he suffer hunger or thirst, or any injuries or unkind usage from his fellow-inhabitants,

nor

nor shall scorching heat, or piercing cold light on him, but all these, and such like "former things" are passed away." Rev. xxi. 4. Isai. xxxiii. 24. Rev. vii. 16.

V. It will be a deliverance from all God's wrath and anger. Death will indeed deliver the wicked from the miseries of the present life, and with this view is rashly sought by many ill prepared for it. But they little consider, that at the same time it will deliver them up into the hands of an angry God, the impression of whose wrath on their souls will excite inexpressibly greater anguish in them, than they ever felt from any of their former evils. A dreadful remedy, a thousand times worse than all the diseases which it cures! But they who die in the Lord, with the utter abolition of all the lesser evils which go before, shall escape all the greater ones which are due after death. "On such the second, and "most formidable, death hath no power." Rev. xxi. 6. When the decisive sentence is given, it will be charged with no curse, but a most reviving benediction for them. Consequently on the execution of it, they shall "not come into condemnation, or go away with the wicked into everlasting punishment, but with the righteous into "life eternal." And, O what ravishing sensations of pleasure will they feel, when they find, at the time the wrath of God was to come, or else for ever to be removed, for the issue of which they had so many fears and trembling thoughts in this world, that then it comes not nigh them; they are set at an infinite distance from it, and shall only with their eyes behold (and perhaps continue to see yet in a composed undisturbed manner) this reward executed on the wicked, to heighten their relishes and thankful resentments of their own deliverance

ance from so huge an evil deserved by them as well as others, and only prevented by the free and distinguishing grace of God ! What gladsome and transporting emotions also shall spring up in their breasts, while they know that in the blessed world wherein they are now lodged, there shall be no more curse, no more remnants of that fatherly displeasure which often visited their transgressions, though forgiven, with a rod in this world ; no broken bones, no wounded spirit, no distresses of conscience, no distance or estrangement, not a frown or a cloud on God's countenance, nor in their own minds any more doubt of his love, or fear of his anger, which were so often their burden and complaint here !

VI. It is a deliverance from all relative and sympathising sufferings and sorrows. Let us be never so much privileged here with a personal exemption from trouble and misery ; yet the world about us, our fellow-creatures on all hands, our particular friends, fellow-Christians, and the church of God, what by iniquity abounding every where, what by sore and grievous calamities spreading around us, and often lighting on those who lie near our hearts ; what by the declensions, divisions, and persecutions of the people of God, will find full employ for the tender and mournful passions. And both nature and grace require, and strongly incline us to a large, however regular exercise of them on these occasions. But now heaven will give no room for any of this sympathy, which, were there any place for it, would interrupt and tarnish every one's individual share of felicity. In it are no objects and occasions for our pity and condolence, any more than for our resentment : none to suffer with, or to suffer by. It is a fellowship
of

of all holy and happy souls. Sin and misery will be all confined to hell; and the guilty and wretched there will be far enough divided in situation, and by the utter cessation of all bands between any of them and the inhabitants of heaven, to excite in the latter any compassion or grief for them. But in their own world, and among those with whom they are united in society and endeared love, they will see in every one the same substantial happiness and satisfaction they feel within themselves, and have a common relish of it with their own.

VII. And lastly, it will be a deliverance from death. Heaven is "a continuing city; in it there will be no death." Heb. xiii. 14. Rev. xxi. 4. It will retain all its inhabitants, who shall never go out, but be fixed as pillars in this temple, Rev. iii. 12. The assurance of this for ourselves will perfect our own happiness and satisfaction. The assurance of it for others will perfect our friendly and benevolent joys; it will dry up one of the bitterest springs of relative afflictions, which is always opening and running in this world, our missing and mourning so many taken away from among us, who have been dear and agreeable companions to us. But the friendships of heaven are as perpetual as they are pure and perfect.

But it is time now to say somewhat,

Secondly, Of the positive felicity of the heavenly world, of which the less will suffice, as several of its ingredients are easily understood from the evils and miseries which they stand in opposition to, and because we can have but a general idea, as has been hinted, of this part, rather knowing what heaven is not, than what in particular it is. However, what belongs to this state

is all great, excellent, and glorious. It is glory itself. Now the glory which constitutes the heavenly happiness, is both objective and subjective, and these reciprocally influencing each other, and inseparably concurring to form it. There is a glory without, objects of unspeakable lustre and glory, which will be exhibited and presented to the saints in heaven to converse with. And there will be a glory within themselves: all the parts and powers of their nature will be rendered inexpressibly glorious, as by an elevation of them into a fitness to converse with the glorious objects before them, so by an actual exercise on them, and the most satisfying gratification by them. Hence the frequent expression in scripture of their happiness in heaven, is their being glorified. And it is the glory of God either way, as it is often called. He makes all the glory of heaven; he is the principal object himself of the saints beatific converse, and he forms all the other objects, as well as themselves, glorious. As the subjective glory of heaven thus necessarily includes the objective, I shall say nothing of the latter, but as it falls under the former, except a word or two about the manner of displaying the glories of heaven to the saints, that a perfect happiness and satisfaction may result from their admission into them. And here we may observe, that all these glories will be revealed in a propitious and amiable light: God will manifest himself to his saints as their own God, and all his perfections and operations as arrayed in love. No room will be left for terror and dismay from the full blaze of his majesty above; as but a few beams of it breaking in on some of his people here have oppressed their souls with the most dreadful apprehensions.

For

For in heaven it is "their own God is their glory." *Isai. lx. 19.*

Again, the revelation of heavenly glories will be made to the blessed in a measure exactly suited to their faculties and capacities. There will be no deficiency, to cause an uneasy and unsatisfied craving, no excess to overpower and exhaust the spirits. Now, the principal parts of glorification are perfect knowledge, perfect rectitude, and a perfect employ of the active powers; with the highest pleasure and satisfaction interwoven through each.

I. There will be a perfect knowledge in heaven; a knowledge in the very best manner of the best and noblest things. This knowledge will in a great measure be intuitive, and so consequently very comprehensive, easy, clear, and satisfying. It is represented in scripture under the notion of vision; not distant by the help of a glass, and borrowed lights; but face to face, an immediate vision of the objects as they are in themselves shining into the eye of the mind, in their own divine light; not superficial and partial, but intimate and penetrating through many, and very far into their nature at once, in some resemblance of God's own manner of knowing all things, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* And O what treasures of wisdom and knowledge shall in heaven be continually laid open! There shall the saints see God himself, the All in All, the perfection of beauty and love, "see his face, see him as he is," *Matt. v. 8. Rev. xxii. 4. 1 John iii. 2.* "The beauty of the Lord their God shall now be upon them;" and they shall have intimate and delightful perceptions of all his attributes, united as they are in him, and beaming forth their harmonious influences on them. They shall be-

hold how he has, and does love them, and preserve a conscious sense of this love always warm and fresh on their hearts. They shall see the Three divine persons in their mysterious union and distinction, as far as it is possible for creatures to know of it, discern clearly their respective part in the economy of man's salvation, and have a full communion with them. They shall particularly see Jesus the glorious God-man, the brightest mirror of deity, the "express image of the Father's person," in beholding whose glory the heavenly state is summed up, John xvii. 24. O what extasies of delight must attend this sight of Christ, one so transcendently amiable in himself, their immediate pattern and head, and whose wonderful love in his former humiliation, and in its present emanation, is seen and tasted all along! Now also the everlasting purposes of God, with the works of nature, providence, redemption, grace, and glory accomplishing them, will be seen together; and the whole scheme, viewed at once, will cause the seeming blemishes of particular parts to appear real beauties, and all of it most just, magnificent, and admirable. Now too shall all the rich and deep sense of the sacred oracles so highly prized here, and from whence all saving illuminations, and the beginnings of eternal life were derived, be perfectly unfolded: the light of heaven, by shewing it all fulfilled in the events of time and of eternity, will leave no ambiguity on it. Once more, they shall have a particular acquaintance and knowledge, as of the nature, so of the persons of the blessed angels, and fellow-saints. And O how pleasant will such knowledge, and the friendly communion it introduces, be!

But then, II. In heaven there will be a perfect rectitude,

rectitude, and regular harmony in all the powers of the soul. It will be the result of seeing God and Christ as they are, to become and remain like to them in holiness: 1 John iii. 2. As the understanding clearly and steadily beholds the beauties of holiness, and all excellency, in these great originals, and seeing approves and admires them; the soul will naturally take and keep a correspondent impress, and be satisfied with this divine likeness. Entire conformity to the nature and will of God, now attained, love to him and his holy and blessed ones in its vigour and empire, an inherent and constant liberty and power to do whatever one ought, or which is the same thing in this happy state, to do whatever one would; what is such a complexion of spirit but its health and perfection? what is it but the very temper and element of satisfaction? peace and pleasure are wrought into it, and inseparably mix with the conscious possession and exercise of it. The saints above thus constituted shall feel themselves all well and happy within.

III. In consequence of this, the active powers will be fully and most delightfully employed in the incessant praises of God and of the Lamb, and in whatever other unknown services may be assigned them, all noble and pleasurable.

Now all this positive felicity of the saints, is, and will be known to be eternal, even as their salvation. While they rejoice in the present sense of it, as adequate to all their desires and capacities; they will rejoice further in assured hope of its continuing as it is, without end, and without change, except it be by perpetually increasing.

APPLICATION.

I. Then, sure heaven and eternal life can be nothing else but the gift of pure grace. Who can allow himself to think that so vast and durable a blessing is no more than a due reward for the very imperfect and polluted obedience of a momentary life? Nor is it enough to own and accept it of grace; our hearts should be ravished and transported with wonder and praise, that from under a sentence of condemnation, and from the very borders of the pit of destruction, we should be called to inherit this salvation with eternal glory. O what manner of love in the Father to prepare, and in the Son to procure it for us!

II. Since holiness appears an essential ingredient in final happiness, we learn that we must be holy in order to be happy. Let us then diligently enquire, whether holiness be habitually wrought in us now, and never fondly wish or hope for a mansion above, which could not suit or please us, nor shall ever be granted to us, without it. Let us be solicitous, not only to have the life of God and of heaven truly rooted in our souls, but to cherish and improve it by delightful converses with our God and Saviour, by a more thorough moulding of our wills into the divine will, by an exact attendance on all the services agreeing to our station on earth, by a deadness of heart to the trifles of this world, and by predominant desires of the upper, as infinitely better.

Lastly, How should the believing thoughts and hopes of heaven relieve us under, and reconcile us to all the hardships, labours, and sufferings of the short time of our life on earth, and to the pains and agonies of the far shorter time of our dying, which

which lies in the way toward it! Is not such a prize richly worth all this, and a great deal more, were we called to it? Wherefore, “reckoning
“that the sufferings of this present time are not
“worthy to be compared with the glory that shall
“be revealed in us, and that our light afflictions here,
“which are but for a moment, do only work out
“for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight
“of glory, let us be stedfast, unmoveable, always
“abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch
“as we know that our labour is not in vain in the
“Lord.”

FINIS.

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